

SPiritual



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CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

Fr. William of the Infant Jesus, O.C.D.

MYSTICAL BODY AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Sr. Mary Francille, C.S.J.

HOW THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH UNITES US TO GOD

Fr. Charles M. Magsam, M.M.

HOW THE CHURCH REGARDS SINNERS

Fr. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

FAILURE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.

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and

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THE DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS

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SPIRITUAL LIFE

A Catholic Quarterly

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FATHER WILLIAM OF THE INFANT JESUS, O.C.D., Editor

VOLUME 3

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Editorial

GOD is the fullness of life. It is a trinitarian life, flowing from Father to the Son and from the Father and the Son into the Holy Spirit. This life unfolds forever in Christ, "the first-born among many brethren" . . . because it has well pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell." What Christ received desires with infinite desire to share with all men. Therefore God appointed Him head of the body, the Church. "I am the vine, you are the branches." Vine and branches are one complete organism; they live and work together, and together bear fruit. All who are baptized are united in Christ, in one body, through which flows the life which He possesses in all its fullness.

The fundamental, the important and imperative thing for a Christian is, then, to dwell in Christ; to cling and adhere to Him with all his might, grafted onto Him in one living organism, with the life of Christ flowing through him. "As the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in Me. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch that is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

There is an easy and unsavory tendency to talk about this, that, and the other form of prayer; to argue over the value of different kinds of piety; to differentiate multifarious movements; and all the time we are idling on the threshold, failing to get into the heart of the matter, the actual truth and center of our Christian faith.

The purpose of this issue of *Spiritual Life* is to look into the essentials, into the pivot of our faith, into that which makes a Christian and "holy as the heavenly Father is holy" — the *being* of Christ so often alluded to by St. Paul.

Christ the Mediator

Father William of the Infant Jesus, O.C.D.

THEY walked with God. And they talked with Him. It involved no great effort at all. It was just the spontaneous response of our unsullied first parents as they strolled leisurely through Eden's lush pastures in the company of God. They were electrically aware of God's presence. All of their human activity was centered and focused on Him. Wanting nothing for their perfection, desiring nothing outside of God for their happiness, they were filled to the brim; and they enjoyed God.

Adam, the first man, called to share by grace in the divine life, represented in God's eyes the whole of mankind. Adam's fall was the fall of mankind. Separated from God, the only source and goal of life, mankind, like some dizzy planet detached from its sun, revolved in aimless convolutions around itself. Man dethroned God and enthroned himself. And his throne throttled his deeper human aspirations, threatened his life and fettered him to the earth. His own self became the center of his striving and yearning. Man came to feel God, the source of his life, as a burden. But man cannot live without God. So man fell sick and died. Selfishness made him sick; it was his primal sin; it was his death. And all mankind — incurably self-centered — died with him. So with supernatural life gone, flung away by Adam for himself and all his descendants by the common law of inheritance, men and women were born into the world with no natural hope of ever again living a Godlike life. Men and women were born dead; and criminals too.

The Coming of Christ

"Between God and man there was no longer any relationship except that of dependence heightened and deepened and stained deep crimson by a horrible crime that all of human tears could wash away. Man had deliberately broken the bonds of love and friendship between himself and God. There remained only relationship of a rebellion for which man could make no reparation."

"His crime was against an infinite God. His repentance must continue to be always the apology of a finite being. The crime direct from man to God. The repentance could only be the poor act of one small rebel who, to wage war against him had used the blessings and favors and the very existence given him by his Maker."¹

Having rebelled against God, man was deprived of his right to his adopted sonship, excluded from his inheritance of eternal happiness, supernaturally dead and incapable of seeing, knowing, loving and possessing God, a criminal guilty of a crime beyond the reach of any apology he can offer or any reparation he can make.

The Old Testament is the story of how God re-educated man kind, readying it, bit by bit, to receive the divine gifts He destined for it. The whole purpose of the Old Testament was to prepare for Him who was to come. The sacred history of the centuries between Adam's fall and Christ's coming is a record of *mirabilia Dei*.

And so God made a natural covenant with Noah, and He chose Abraham, gracing and favoring His race in view of things to come. He sent His angels like messengers of lightning to break down the barriers between man and God. He raised up prophetic spiritual giants of humanity with a wonderful awesome sense of God, with keen insight into His divine plan, and a remarkable talent for defending the rights of God with vehemence, and denouncing the egregious folly of man with acrimonious invective. They were powerful men, but they were finite men. Their achievements, therefore, were always limited, and sometimes nullified. But they did what they could, expending themselves unremittingly.

¹ D. A. Lord, S.J., *Our Part in the Mystical Body* (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, p. 31.

for the purposes of God; *but in the end they pointed to Him who was to come.*

And He came. "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not; then said I: 'Behold, I come.' "²

The Unique Priest

At that point the most singular event in the history of the world unfolded. It marked the pinnacle of all human achievements. It was the epitome of all that went before, the ineluctable center of all that would follow. For at that moment a Man was born who in the first split second that He was conceived recognized who He was and why He existed. A human soul, a mind with infinite range, a will capable of limitless love which a moment before did not exist began to exist and saw immediately with shimmering clarity and unlimited comprehension, without being dazzled or frightened — saw who He was.

He saw who He was because when He came alive He was looking with all of His might and all of His heart into the face of God whom He recognized at once as both His Father and Himself. And this Man was able to say with infallible certainty and divine serenity: I am God.

That was the human experience of Christ at the moment of His birth. "I am God" means so many things. And Christ expressed it in various ways: I am the vine, you are the branches; I am the way, the truth, and the life; all power is Mine in heaven and on earth; all things are delivered to Me, and no one knows the Son but the Father: neither does anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him, I am the door. By Me, if any man enter in he shall be saved; without Me you can do nothing.

"I am God" coming from man could mean only one thing: the unbridgeable gap between God and man was bridged. The transcendent, inaccessible, devouring God of might and majesty was not only close to man, abiding with him; He was Man. The Word was made flesh. God became Man. The result of this unique and stupendous historical incident was that the human race now had one Man who was really what all men were meant to be: one

² Hebr. 10:5-11.

Man in whom there was absolutely nothing to impede or trammel His total and immediate and irrevocable response to God. The natural human creature in Him was taken up fully into the divine Son. Thus, in one instance humanity had, so to speak, arrived and had passed into the life of Christ.

Because Christ is the everlasting Man, this divine-human condition of humanity lasts forever. And because He is Head of humanity, what He was and what He did affects the life of every man. You can put it this way: just as the fall of Adam from God's grace and favor left all of his descendants a way of life that was darkened and hampered and crippled at every turn; so the rise of Christ as the new Head of humanity has a healing, and ennobling and transforming effect on the life of every man. God, who did not cease to govern and sustain the human race because of Adam, begins to enliven the whole human mass in a new and unspeakably wonderful way because of Christ. Not only because of Him, but through and in Him. From that incarnational point the effect spreads through all mankind. It makes a difference to people who lived before Christ, as well as to people who lived after Him. It makes a difference to people who have not even heard of Him and who, perhaps, never will. When God became Man there was revolution, reform, and renewal at the core of the human world. It's like dropping one tiny particle of saccharine into a cup of coffee, giving the whole drink a new taste.

No wonder we started counting the years all over again. Christ started something new — a new heaven and a new earth: a new heaven because where God is, there is heaven; and a new earth because of the radical change in man who rules and subdues the earth. The Incarnation did not necessarily mean that there would be better, improved men, with nicer manners. It meant a whole world of brand new men, transformed, elevated to a new level of nature. It is an indescribably deep change — from being creatures of God to being sons of God.

The chief purpose of the Incarnation was to begin on earth the kind of life God lives eternally in heaven. This happened when God became Man, and the eternal canticle of love which the Word sang from all eternity in the bosom of God now emanated with the same richness and worth from the human heart of Christ.

who marches before the generations of men with a song of love and praise in His heart, and a single word on His lips, namely: Eternally Father.

And so there was one Man in the world in whom the created life, derived from His Mother, was completely and perfectly attuned to the divine life begotten of God. There was one God-centered Man. There was one Man magnificently and gloriously alive with the Trinitarian life of God.

The Bridge

The mystery of the Incarnation has three-dimensional ramifications that have not even begun to be exhausted by all the theology ever written. But just as "all things were recapitulated and summed up in Christ," so can this infinite variety of deep-seated, worldwide consequences be summed up, or at least suggested by a phrase that came like a triumphant thunderclap from the blazing spirit of St. Paul: "We have a Pontiff . . . Jesus Christ, Son of God." These few words make up a very small and simple declarative sentence. But it is a sentence that is packed with more meaning, power, and glory than any other ever recorded in human archives. And it resounds in the bosom of the Godhead. It expresses human aspiration and fulfillment that lie beyond the wildest human dream; it hints at the supreme and reckless ingenuity of divine love; it involves the throbbing, voiceless, exultant glory of the earth; it proclaims a truce to all figures and types, prophecies, images, and shadows, and announces the permanent, enduring reality of Christ, the great High Priest who in His own Person summarizes the multiform victims that had been offered to God and draws together in their fullness the priesthoods, from that of Abel, sacrificing at his primitive altar, through Melchisedech, offering bread and wine, to the high priests of the mosaic sacrifices. "For there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the Man, Jesus Christ."³

In all of the grand sources of theology — Scripture, Tradition, the Fathers, St. Thomas — you can find no better word to express the nature and mission of Christ than "Priest."

Almost the whole Epistle to the Hebrews is an amplification of St. Paul's realization that Christ is "called by God a High Priest

³ Tim. 1:2-5.

according to the order of Melchisedech. . . . For it was fitting that we should have a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needed not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices first for His own sins, and then for the people's; for this He did once in offering Himself.”⁴

There is only one priesthood — that of Christ. Others have had some participation of the priesthood; He has it in its entirety, or rather it is not so much that He has it as that He is it. He is the whole priesthood. So He is not a Priest among priests, more powerful and holy than they. He is the Unique Priest. He includes all priesthood in Himself.⁵

Christ has not merely fulfilled the function of a priest, He was a Priest; and He was so from the first moment of His mortal life intrinsically, and in all His acts. He was and is essentially a Priest in virtue of the Incarnation (the Hypostatic Union). This teaching has been luminously illustrated by all patristic and theological tradition. Both show that the priesthood of Christ is derived directly from His Incarnation. “The Word who is at once the perfect image of the Father and the exemplar of creation, from the time of the Incarnation cannot be other than the Mediator of the religious bond between God and man, and consequently the priest.”⁶

The Mediator

That is why the Saviour could afford to lie in the straw, walk aimlessly through the fields, work quietly in His father's shop, remain hidden most of His life: He was mediating just by being Himself, the God-Man. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”⁷

Mediation, according to St. Thomas, is the essential note of priesthood. “The proper office of the priest is to be a mediator between God and the people, insofar as he transmits divine things to the people . . . and insofar as he offers the prayers of the

⁴ Hebr. 7:26-27.

⁵ P. Mersch, *Morale et Corps Mystique*.

⁶ G. Salet, S.J., *Le Christ Notre Vie* (Casterman: 1937), p. 53.

⁷ 2 Cor. 5:19.

people to God, and somehow satisfies for their sins. . . .”⁸ Mediation is, likewise, the key to the scriptural and traditional aspects of the Incarnation and Redemption which underlie Christ’s priestly work of reconciliation. Christ is the perfect Mediator and the unique Mediator: (1) by His very constitution as God and Man, and (2) by His infinite work of redemption. Christ is man’s only access to the Father. Apart from Him and His priestly work of mediation, there is no salvation. Take away either the completeness of His divinity or the completeness of His humanity and the picture is spoiled; for while He is Unique Priest and Mediator as Man, this is true only because He is also God. The substantial mediation of the Incarnate Word is manifested to mankind by His life, words, and works of priestly mediation, especially by His sacrifice on Calvary. Since His priesthood and priestly mediation are eternal, they still exist for men today. Christ is the living bridge between God and man.⁹

⁸ St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III, 22, a. 1, c.

⁹ T. M. Hesburgh, “The Relation of the Sacramental Characters of Baptism and Confirmation to the Lay Apostolate,” *Studies in Sacred Theology*, No. 97 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University, 1946).

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The Mystical Body of Christ and the Spiritual Life

Sister Mary Francille, C.S.J.

WHEN we turn back the dial of time and view the pages of Church history, undoubtedly some century stands out as the one during which we should like to have lived. For some, the first century, the era of great martyrs of the Faith, whose "blood became the seed of the Church," stands out in bold relief. For others, the Golden Age allures in imagination to the days when "Europe and the Faith were one."

History proves, however, that in every age we have an emphasis on some doctrine that best suits the needs of the people of the time. Future history, we hope, will mark the twentieth century as one of great sanctity, for in every crisis God raises up those through whom He will sustain the holiness characteristic of His Mystical Body.

In the Providence of God, our lives have been set in the twentieth century, during which Christ has spoken, in a very special way, through three great pontiffs who bore the name *Pius*.

St. Pius X, who began the Eucharistic Springtime of our day, revealed in the motto of his pontificate the single purpose of his life "To restore all things in Christ." This motto and his statement that "active participation in the liturgy is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit" have vitally affected every phase of the spiritual life.

Pius XI gave us the great challenge to "form Christ in those regenerated by Baptism," reiterating the plea of Pius X when he said that "when people assist at the sacred functions, they should not be detached and silent spectators."

Pius XII, realizing what the world needs most in these days of dismay and disruption, unfolded before us the ancient doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, and its corollary, corporate worship, in two of his memorable encyclicals.

The directives of these three Popes give us a pattern to follow in the pursuit of sanctity in all vocations. Especially in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* we have a synthesis of Christian unity of doctrine, and the public worship of united Christians is elucidated in *Mediator Dei*.

Foundation doctrines for a sound spirituality especially applicable in our day are the doctrine of the Mystical Body and its personal and social implications, the priesthood of the laity, a knowledge of the office of Christ as Mediator, a deep awareness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as the official worship of Christ and His members, the life-giving sacramental system, and the sanctifying power of the Church Year. All of these are definitively set forth in the two encyclicals. Herein lies a pattern, a blueprint for a truly Christian life in the various vocations glorified in the words of Pius XII:

When the Fathers of the Church sing the praises of this Mystical Body of Christ, with its ministries, its variety of ranks, its offices, its conditions, its orders, its duties, they are thinking not only of those who have received Holy Orders, but of all those too, who, following the evangelical counsels, pass their lives either actively among men, or hidden in the silence of the cloister, or who aim at combining the active and contemplative life according to their Institute; as also of those who, though living in the world, consecrate themselves wholeheartedly to spiritual or corporal works of mercy, and of those who live in the state of holy matrimony. Indeed, let this be clearly understood, especially in these our days: fathers and mothers of families, those who are godparents through Baptism, and in particular those members of the laity who collaborate with the ecclesiastical hierarchy in spreading the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer occupy an honorable, if often a lowly, place in the Christian community, and even they under the impulse of God and with His help, can reach the heights of supreme holiness, which, Jesus Christ has promised, will never be wanting to the Church.¹

¹ Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (New York: America Press, 1943), par. 22, 23.

Membership in the Mystical Body, given to us at baptism, should render us joyous members of Christ as we exult in our privilege of redemption. St. Thomas Aquinas says that at baptism "a complete transformation takes place in the soul. By means of this most necessary sacrament, the soul becomes a temple of the Blessed Trinity, an adopted son of God, and 'a partaker of the Divine Nature.'" At baptism supernatural life is transmitted to the soul, which St. Thomas calls "the dawn of eternal life within souls."²

The seed of sanctity is planted in baptism; it will be nourished by the life of grace, and will bear fruit and reap a harvest by co-operation with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Soul of the Mystical Body, who will form the soul to the likeness of Christ, the Head.

The Christian, desirous of high personal sanctity, will find in this doctrine a unifying principle of spiritual life, motivation which will affect every daily duty, and the comforting consolation that this union with Christ, the Head, will bring. The Christian will see himself as a branch of the True Vine, that should and must bear fruit. The vocation to spiritual perfection is given to all by virtue of baptism.

Tremendous progress has been made in bringing this doctrine and a baptismal consciousness out of the realm of print into reality. The opportunities for a personal awareness of the means of living the doctrine are innumerable. The social implications are likewise manifold. We shall consider a few under the general phases of prayer and work in the life of the individual. The crystallization of these words into action is the great means at hand for the development of what Pere de Guibert calls a "mysticism of service," no less necessary in the work of the Mystical Body, according to our Holy Father, than the "mysticism of contemplation."

Prayer life should center around the great act of religion — our participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"It is desirable that all the faithful should be aware that to participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice is their chief duty and supreme dignity."²

To the Mass the member of Christ brings every thought, word, deed, worry, joy, and sorrow of his life. These seemingly insignifi-

² Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (New York: America Press, 1948), par. 80.

ant details are symbolized by the offering of bread and wine and the drop of water. They are transformed at the Consecration and are united with Christ's offering. Here we have a worthy offering of adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, and petition.

Religious and the laity, better called "God's holy people," may daily reconsecrate their time and talents to fulfilling their noble function in the Mystical Body as they unite in social worship at the Holy Sacrifice. There is no more stimulating thought than an awareness of the bond of unity and charity that we form with all other Christians, with members of one's own religious community and all other religious communities, with pupils, parents, families, priests, bishops, and our Holy Father — all forming one Body with Christ, our Head. All who are engaged in teaching others, whether they be priests, parents, religious, or lay teachers, deserve the commendation of our Holy Father:

They are to be praised who with the idea of getting the Christian people to take part more easily and more fruitfully in the Mass, strive to make them familiar with the "Roman Missal," so that the faithful, united with the priest, may pray together in the very words and sentiments of the Church. They also are to be commended who strive to make the liturgy even in an external way a sacred act in which all who are present may share.³

Mental and vocal prayers take on a greater meaning when drawn from the prayer of the Church; e.g., from the Psalms, the Ordinary, and Propers of the Mass. Familiarity with the word of God in the Psalms will place on our lips for life prayers inspired by God Himself. For those who do not recite the Divine Office, this familiarity will effect a bond of union with those who do.

Pius XII commends the following of the Church Year:

By these suitable ways and methods in which the liturgy at stated times proposes the life of Jesus Christ for our meditation, the Church gives us examples to imitate, points out treasures of sanctity for us to make our own; since it is fitting that the mind believes what the lips sing, and that what the mind believes should be practiced in public and private life.⁴

³ *Ibid.*, par. 105.

⁴ *Ibid.*, par. 153.

and again:

The liturgical year is Christ Himself Who is ever living in His Church. . . . These mysteries, according to the Doctors of the Church, are shining examples of Christian perfection, as well as sources of divine grace, due to the merit and prayers of Christ; they still influence us because each mystery brings its own special grace for our salvation. . . . By means of His inspiration and help and through the co-operation of our wills we can receive from Him living vitality as branches do from the tree and members from the head; thus slowly and laboriously we can transform ourselves, "unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ."⁵

That the texts of the Church prepare the soul for contemplation is evident from this practice in the lives of saints like the great St. Teresa of Avila. It is recorded that in her prayer life she followed the cycle of the liturgy with great attention, and she desired this activity for her spiritual daughters.

An impetus to personal sanctity is the realization that the life of each member is bound up with the life of the Church. Translated into action, everything done to others is done to Christ. The word "neighbor" includes not merely those of an immediate apostolate, but those of a remote apostolate as well; in other words, all who are actual or potential members of the Mystical Body.

Whether the life be that of a priest, religious, layman, child, or adolescent, an application of the doctrine of the Mystical Body has social implications that sublimate the most prosaic daily duties. To acknowledge Christ-in-our-neighbor spiritualizes the commonplace. The priest serves Christ in the minute details of parish life, whether it be in the direct ministration of the sacraments, or the sympathetic, kindly advice given in the time-consuming interviews with members of his flock. The religious, through a practical application of the doctrine, sees Christ-in-need in the first grader struggling with letter combinations, in the child of a broken home seeking understanding, the sometimes trying teen-ager who seems to defy all effort to form Christ in him, as well as in the members of his religious community. The religious engaged in social service pierces the veil of faith to minister to Christ-suffering-in-His-

⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 165.

members who endure incurable diseases, or like Marthas to serve His poor in their homes.

Parents, realizing that the family is "a little church," the Mystical Body in miniature, and that the father represents Christ to his little ones, try to form Christ in their children the while they serve Him in the multitudinous tasks of twenty-four-hours-a-day family living.

The laborer, factory worker, bus driver, stenographer, salesgirl, and others in various occupations of twentieth-century life behold Christ beside them on crowded trains, buses, at work, and in social life. That neighbor is the Christ-in-need of the alms of a sympathetic word, an encouraging smile, a spirit of comradeship in a valley of tears.

Whatever the vocation, profession, occupation, an awareness of the service of Christ in the service of the person we term "our neighbor" will motivate us to generous practices of this sublime doctrine, which sadly is too often but a theoretical belief. The reading of a book like Doctor Dooley's *Deliver Us From Evil* shocks us into the reality of the application of the doctrine of the Mystical Body as we learn of the Christlike ministrations of American sailors to the persecuted Vietnamese.

In addition to serving Christ in others, the realization that "He selects, He determines, He distributes every single grace to every single person"⁶ indoctrinates us with potent examples of the will of God expressed in the incidents of the present moment. The recognition and consequent acceptance of the most minute details of daily living are surely the beginning of sanctity, leading to perfect conformity to God's will.

The possibilities of developing the life of sanctity through intimate union with Christ our Head are innumerable. The two encyclicals of Pius XII are powerful sources of inspiration as they set forth a school of sound spirituality. A study of these encyclicals will unfold principles in the pursuit of perfection most appropriate for "all faithful Christians." The imitation of the ideals he sets forth will nurture saints growing to spiritual maturity in the shadow of the altar. They will be fruitful branches brought to the fullness of spiritual life by the Vine.

⁶ Pius XII, *op. cit.*, par. 51.

Father Magsam is assistant novice master at the Maryknoll Novitiate, Bedford, Mass. What he writes about here is of vast and incalculable importance for spiritual growth in Christ. Without this harmonious fusion of liturgy and contemplation there can be no real worship.

How the Prayer of the Church Unites Us to God

Father Charles M. Magsam, M.M.

GOD put into man a deep basic need for prayer when He made man a complex creature of mind and will and feeling. The reality of man's whole being needs to accept and co-operate with all of reality: God, men, and all created things. The devil and his kingdom are excluded from co-operation but not from awareness.

The almighty beginning and meaning of all things is God. Since man depends upon God, owes Him total obedience, and is perfected by a heaven-bent union with God, it is a perversion of man's natural being to try to trim God down to the size of his own imagined security and satisfaction or to try to manipulate God into serving man's false *ego*-ideal or a false perfectionism. God refuses to be anybody's sentimental "honey" or anybody's petty accountant.

God Shows the Way

Union with God is always on God's terms and on the terms that God has put into man's very nature. Therefore what man has done by sin that, by God's help, man must undo by asceticism and worship. That is where liturgy and meditation first meet: on the grounds where they prepare for one another.

Meditation leads us to see the need of subjecting the flesh to the spirit, since God has made the spirit to be man's master and it is in the spirit that God comes and dwells. Through the spirit

the flesh becomes the tabernacle of God. Meditations issue in definite resolutions: there must be self-denial and such and such a practice will be its shape today. Through the self-mastery gained by self-denial, the spirit is purified and prepared to sweep man's whole being into the glory of worship.

Liturgy in turn increases the profit from meditation by providing a certain asceticism in the very activity of worship. Liturgy exercises us, trains us, in subjecting the flesh to the spirit and the spirit to God. Corporately, together as the Mystical Christ in the activity of mediation, we must say and do certain specified things at certain specified times regardless of our personal inclinations at the moment. Often we must kneel or stand, sometimes prostrate, and always corporately submit to others and co-operate with others. We must speak, sing, or keep silent as the service requires. The posture and gesture of ritual train the body to speak the soul's conformity to its Maker.

Through and through, our corporate worship is an exercise in supernaturalism, in seeing things God's way, and in doing things God's way. It is the antidote to naturalism. But it should not be looked upon as an ascetic discipline, to be endured resignedly. It is dominantly a joyous celebration of all that has already been accomplished for the redemption of man and a glorious expectation of Christ's final victory and our entering into eternal peace.

Union With God

In its own way the asceticism involved in worship can serve as a model for all mortification. The discipline of the body is always secondary, taken in stride quite naturally as the normal accompaniment of duty. There is the proper motivation of sorrow for sin which runs through the liturgy. And all the while full attention is on seeking union with God, on seeking His glory, and on entering into glory with Him.

Going a step farther into the relation of liturgy and mental prayer, it can be said that in practice they intermingle. Where if not in worship would there be thoughts of God, affections, and resolutions? When the *Pater* or *Credo* are said silently during Divine Office, when the Lessons of Mass or Office are read, when parts of the sung Mass or verses in the Psalms are alternated,

during these times silent mental prayer alternates with recited or chanted prayer.

By the monastic rule of St. Benedict, the Psalms were to be recited slowly in order to allow silent prayer to accompany them. That is why he set aside no special time for mental prayer. The current tendency to efficiency, always praiseworthy in its own measure, by concentrated attention to scheduled and particularized activities seems to require special times for mental prayer even in monastic communities.

Since the ways, or methods, of mental prayer normally vary with spiritual progress, they need to be considered step by step in relation to worship. They are found to be present in, and not antagonistic to, the liturgy. Let it be taken for granted that the steps are seldom if ever clearly marked off and that elements of one stage may appear in another stage.

Discursive Prayer

Accepting traditional terminology and pleading for latitude in the use of the word "traditional," we naturally begin with discursive prayer. Its usual divisions are: preliminary dispositions, body and application. Clearly, the Invitatory, the Introit, the versicles and responses, while having other purposes also, do serve to alert us to the presence of God and to the action or prayer at hand. The *Confiteor*, the hymns, the *Deus in adjutorium* surely aim to dispose the faculties for prayer. As for the body of the meditation, the homilies of Mass and Office and the Lessons of Mass and Office provide ample considerations. The Psalms and versicles are dominantly affective prayer, very well suited to stimulate spontaneous colloquy or, in times of dryness, to provide almost the only kind of colloquy that is possible. The homilies of Mass and Office as well as the orations contain particular applications and flow easily into still more personalized needs. For thanksgiving there are the noble *Te Deum*, *Gloria in excelsis*, *Gloria Patri*, etc.

With spiritual growth there is an increased thinking of what is beyond our immediate personal sorrows and joys. The sufferings of Christ Himself and of His members, the spiritual emptiness and distress of those who know Him not become more and more

our personal concern. The glory of Christ victorious in His own resurrected body and victorious in each baptized and faithful member becomes our personal joy.

Affective Prayer

Bringing this enlarged vision and widened sensibilities to a vital, active participation in worship, we find the Psalms a ready expression of our Christ-centered affections. And they in turn deepen and sustain those affections for persons who are approaching a facility in affective prayer or are already at home in it. Hymns, chants, ritual, and beauty of vestments and lights and decorations, tastefully done, help in the same direction. An abiding sorrow for sin also finds its outlet and deepening.

Thus every need of affective prayer is touched to expression even within each service. And as the year of worship unfolds there is special emphasis on one or the other particular affection. Advent emphasizes a feeling of happy expectancy both for the relived first coming of the Saviour and for His final triumphant coming at the world's end. Christmas is a joyous resting in the possession of a Redeemer and the anticipation of eternal possession of Him. Epiphany awakens the desire to manifest Him to the world, the pagan world abroad and the immediate world of friends, neighborhood, and community. Lent stresses loyalty to Christ in His warfare against Satan in view of our baptism and sorrow for our disloyalty. Passiontide takes us into the depths of compassion for our suffering Saviour. Easter brings us to the heights of Resurrection joy and hope and peace. Pentecost urges apostolic desire and action.

Within each service and through the range of affections touched and stirred by the year's worship there is a variety of prayers to express a variety of affections. There are hymns, doxologies, acclamations, versicles, responses, and antiphons. And the Psalms embrace the full range of affections.

Then, as affective prayer grows, it tends to simplify and, according to God's design and gifts of grace, to be generally content with one or the other particular affection. If and when that happens a person is more likely to be satisfied with one or other Psalm

verse, hymn verse, antiphon, thought from a lesson, a brief response, versicle, perhaps an Alleluia. Such brief things are enough to sustain a person in the affective state.

Contemplative Prayer

Before there is any thought given to the next step, progress into contemplative prayer and the harmonizing of liturgy and contemplation, it would be well to think of how liturgy and mental prayer nourish and guide one another.

From mental prayer that flows into action comes the wealth of thought, the increasing fervor, and the practical resolutions that can make for a more perfect participation in worship. Mental prayer promotes an increasing reverence toward all things sacred as well as a growing thought of God at all times. Mental prayer examines the motives of worship, its interior quality, its sincerity, its fruit in our lives. Thus it is a check against mere external performance of ceremony and prayer and song which is really a kind of materialism in action, a practical nominalism.

On the other hand, worship feeds mental prayer with an abundance of dramatized doctrine. The celebration of each mystery of Jesus, of His Mother, and of the saints, with the Lessons of Mass and Office centering the instruction service, brings into prayer-action the Old and New Testaments. This prayer-action is an exercise in and therefore a facilitating of thoughts and attitudes, affections and resolutions about our relations with God. Thus our desires for union with God and our zeal to implant Him in the minds and hearts of everyone become stirred and intensified. And our sense of union with all men is deepened for they are one with us either in physical presence and co-operation or by the love and desire that brings them into our petitions. And need we say that any petitions we may have in mental prayer are more certain of a hearing when they are brought into worship and made one with our God-man Victim?

Worship and Mental Prayer

Worship, therefore, helps to keep mental prayer — its considerations, affections, and resolutions — within the safeguards of God's revealed word and the tradition of His Church. Thus steeped in

Scripture and tradition, mental prayer is less likely to go off on sentimental tangents. It is not an accident that authors who live the liturgy write spiritual books that are safe and consistent. Fed upon such books, a person's spiritual life is more solidly consistent and unified. The essential cross will be carried in union with the mediating Christ.

Since we have put down so many ways in which liturgy and mental prayer blend, it might be in place to discuss some of the ways in which they differ. Mental prayer can take place anywhere, even though we normally seek the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist as the most conducive to union with Him. Besides, mental prayer is an inner activity of the soul; it is momentary in the sense of occupying itself with frequently changing material for thoughts, affections, and resolutions; it is necessarily individual and personalized (within the bounds of reason and faith, of course) in its thoughts, affections, desires, and resolutions.

By contrast, worship, being corporate and shared, is internal in origin but external in expression. It speaks in set prayers, attitudes, gestures, ceremonies. It is normally within special designated places. Its thoughts, affections, resolutions are common to all. It is permanent: hallowed and sanctioned by long and holy use. It is governed by the laws of the Church and the decrees of the Bishop.

To resume now the delicate, mysterious, and unpredictable ways of progress into contemplative prayer, we may begin by saying that the succession of Psalms, Lessons, prayers, and rites are not meant to be hindrances to contemplation. They are hindrances only for those who forget that they are prayer and either plow through them regretfully as ascetic exercises or rest in their exterior beauty. But no art or poetry or ceremonies can ever satisfy the desire for union with God. The elements of worship are not meant to be a mere succession of thoughts and pictures and petitions, like discursive prayer. They are most of all instruments for the worship of God and mediation for men. And when that worship and mediation becomes, by the gift of God, an inner experience of God, then are blended the double celebration of the world-wide redemptive mystery and of a personal mystery. The mysteries of Christ's life are then more than doctrine that is beyond understanding; they are the power of Christ that cannot be limited to time or space and

reach inexhaustibly across the centuries from the historical moment of each event to the moment of each person's experience of His power and presence and Person. In that experience the succession of prayers and Lessons and rites sustain a person in the various states of union which colors, dominates, and integrates everything else.

Our Lord and Our Lady and the Psalms

If there be any doubt about the normal blending of worship and contemplative experience, surely it must vanish in acceptance of the fact that the Psalms were the prayer book of our Lord and of our Lady. Mary's experience of the Incarnation burst into the blended Psalm and Old Testament thoughts that make her *Magnificat*. Christ on the cross, in the moment of most intense personal desolation, found the Psalms His natural expression.

In the prayer of recollection, or active contemplation, the prayers of the liturgy are an excellent way of sustaining the soul in a unified attention, a simple regard upon some thought or affection that becomes the experience of God in this threshold state.

In the prayer of quiet, or passive contemplation, one simple verse of a Psalm, a mere fragment or phrase, a single word can be God's instrument for infusing intimate rest in Him. Psalmody and song become a clear and steady refreshment for the soul in its quietude.

The Holy Spirit at Work

When the prayer of union is the soul's spiritual estate God's revealed word in the liturgy strikes deeply and powerfully into the very substance of the soul. Consciousness of the Holy Spirit at work, already noticeable in active contemplation, becomes so intensified that the saint feels himself or herself to be at once the very voice of the Holy Spirit stirring Christ's Mystical Body and the voice of the whole Christ loving and praising the Father. As St. Teresa of Avila indicates in her "Conceptions of Divine Love," the mystics emerge from these experiences with deepened insights into the meaning of the texts of the liturgy. It is this experience also which has had such a violent impact upon the physical side of the saints. St. Ignatius and St. Joseph of Cupertino

were embarrassed by the mystical phenomena that came upon them while saying the Divine Office. St. Philip Neri often found it difficult to finish a Mass and prolonged it for several hours. St. John of the Cross was once so beside himself as to leave the altar immediately after Holy Communion. St. Teresa of Avila had ecstasies during Mass.

The transforming union, or spiritual marriage, finds the liturgy a loving and untroubled conversation of bride and bridegroom. Now more permanently and more intimately than before, the voices of Christ and of the Church and of the soul in its mystical marriage blend in perfect harmony.

During the dark night of the senses that precedes the prayer of quiet and during the dark night of the spirit that precedes the transforming union the words of the liturgy often bring moments of respite to those in the fires of purification. In the night of the spirit they become gleams of light that pierce a terrible darkness and stir deep desire, joy, and peace. No other prayer seems to have such power to plunge the saints into the depths of divine union.

It should perhaps be added that the mystical phenomena such as ecstasy, visions, suspension of the senses, etc., are largely limited to one of the higher states of union; and even there they are variable, intermittent, and accidental. For mysticism is essentially an intuitive, immediate experience of God and therefore in its essence independent of the senses. By contrast, worship uses material instruments of grace: sacrifice, sacrament, and sacramental. These require the activity of the senses, for through them the soul itself is touched and transformed by grace. But once sufficiently stirred to activity, the mind and will may continue their union with God, unmindful of the senses, and thus mystical experience is framed in liturgy.

Liturgy Is Indispensable

Without doubt, the liturgy is the primary and indispensable source of grace and therefore remains the root of all union with God. The liturgy is Christ-centered, Christ actively mediating, instructing, cleansing, and sanctifying. To neglect the primary and ordinary means of union with God is hardly the way to court the intimacies of His friendship. The saints of God, as a matter of

fact, have shown an essential understanding and love of corporate worship. The saintly Fathers of the Church thought of liturgy and contemplation as spontaneously blending, both expressing man's basic need for God and at the same time helping to fill that need. St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "I knew quite well that in matters of faith no one would ever find me transgressing even the smallest ceremony of the Church, and that for the Church or for any truth of Holy Scripture I would undertake to die a thousand deaths" (*Life*, 33:226, Peers, I). And Venerable Ana de Jesus said of her: "She [St. Teresa] wanted us to participate always in the celebration of the Mass and sought out ways by which we could do this every day, even if it were in the same tone in which we recited the Hours. . . . And if now and then this was impossible it grieved her that we were deprived of that good. Moreover, when the Mass was sung, nothing prevented her from taking part, even though she had just received Holy Communion or was deeply recollected" (Ribera, *Vida de santa Teresa de Jesus*, Barcelona, 1908, p. 633).

The Official Corporate Prayers

The solicitude of St. Teresa of Avila may well have been prompted by a proper understanding of the way official corporate worship functions. Given God's promise and the Sacrifice and command of His Son, God has obliged Himself to answer the official mediation of His Church and to infuse grace into properly disposed hearts. It is His Son speaking and He cannot, as it were, say no. The powers of Christ exercised in official worship are in that sense irresistible. The divine life is channeled to open hearts according to the will of God's worshiping Church. Such confident power is well worth the thousand deaths of a saint.

The mystical experience of God, on the other hand, is always God's free gift. The Holy Spirit breathes more freely when and where He wills, independently of any act or condition on the part of God's Church. Nothing obliges the action of God.

But liturgy is not less a love feast because it is God's commitment. The ardor of the mystic finds full and repeated expression in the texts of worship. When St. Teresa of Avila wrote of the Latin text of the Canticle of Canticles she certainly was speaking

of a liturgical lesson or prayer. "The Lord, for some years now, has given me a great grace each time that I heard or read a few words of the Song of Solomon, so that without understanding clearly what the Latin words mean in Spanish, this recollects and moves my soul much more than the most devout books that I understand, and this happens very often" (*Life, Peers, I*).

Preparation for Eternity

In worship we do more than celebrate the love of God shown to us through the long preparation for the redeeming Christ, through the Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ and through all He has done through the ages in the Mystical Christ. We celebrate also our glorious expectation, so blessedly childlike and naïve is our worship at heart, of nothing less than an inexhaustible communication of divine life and gifts until the crowning of all comes in Christ's final triumph and our entry with Him into eternal peace.

Worshiper and mystic alike share this restless urge to progress toward the better and higher. Love cannot rest until it rests in total possession of the divine Beloved. An immediate expression of this drive is the need of purification. That need of worshiper and aspirant to sanctify finds an instrument in exorcisms, *Confiteors*, many washings, and countless prayers of the liturgy. The Secret of the second Sunday of Advent is a summary expression: "May these holy Mysteries, O Lord, cleanse us by their powerful efficacy, and enable us to come with greater purity to Him who is their foundation." Thus the liturgy both motivates and channels grace for that active interior and exterior mortification which prepares, God willing, for the passive states of union and for passive purifications.

Union of Love With God

"While the sacred liturgy calls to mind the mysteries of Jesus Christ, it strives to make all believers take their part in them so that the divine Head of the Mystical Body may live in all the members with the fulness of His holiness" (Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, par. 152). Thus perfect union of love with God is ultimately the aim of liturgy and actively disposes a person for it. Mystical experience in itself remains necessarily a free gift of God, individualized

and passively received. In this sense mysticism goes beyond liturgy. But while passive mystical experience is not essential to sanctity, the experience of worship is everybody's ordinary way to God and to sanctity.

It may be noted, finally, that in every age man's pursuit of spiritual growth and sanctity takes on a special emphasis. God sent St. Francis of Assisi to live and preach poverty and penances in an age given to the pursuit of wealth and pomp. He sent the Little Flower to live and teach simplicity in a time of rationalism and of the dawning complexities of an age of science. In our own time it may well be that lay people, intimately in touch with current needs and hungering for an approach to God that will suit their busy lives in the world, will work out the special direction of spiritual growth needed for the late twentieth century. For what it is worth, all the lay movements of today seek in the liturgy their way to God. This is to be expected, since liturgy touches with ease every corner and activity of life in the world. Every day seems to see the development of new ways, often suggested by lay people themselves, of carrying worship into the home and there using it to teach and to live an habitual awareness of God as a loving and all-competent Father. God so evidently is forming the homes of saints.

Good, decent people in pursuit of perfection are frequently hampered and crippled by an almost indiscernible un-Christian attitude toward criminals. Father Gillis, former editor of Catholic World gives the Church's own attitude as the best corrective.

How the Church Regards Sinners

Father James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

A YOUNG criminal, turning desperado after having murdered one policeman and mortally wounding another, lay skulking among the back yards, fences, dumps of a Chicago slum. The police, closing in on him, persuaded his sister to broadcast a message: "Johnny, this is your sister; I beg of you to go into the Church, surrender yourself to the priest, make your confession and take your chances with the law." That message was not only blared from the "loud-speaker" of the patrol car, but was carried over television, with pictures of the girl, the police, the back yards to millions of people. Reactions in the mind of hearers were varied. I remember one which expresses a point of view that many good people hold, but that seems to me un-Christian. "What a shame" said a pious woman "that the Church, the priest, the sacrament of penance should be publicized in connection with a murder."

I do not feel that way. Rather it seems to me that the good lady was echoing the pharisaical complaint, "this man eateth and drinketh with sinners." The Church does not abhor criminals. She is the Church of "the poor," and to her, sinners are the poor; criminals and murderers are the poor. Like her Master she ministers to lepers (physical and moral) paying no attention to the cry "unclean! unclean!" No one is less given to sentimentality than the Church; no one more firmly impressed by the truth of responsibility for sin and crime; but it is the Church that originated the phrase "intolerance for sin but tolerance for the sinner."

The Church refuses to excommunicate or anathematize criminals. She is aware that such tolerance damages her reputation among the pharisaical, as the reputation of her Master was damaged in the mind of Simon who said, "If this man were a prophet He would know what manner of woman" is this Magdalen. Finding fault with the Church because she retains the wicked in her fold seems to me substantially identical with the sin of the fastidious who disowned Christ because a mob of derelicts followed Him. Such snobbishness in the moral and spiritual plane seems even more un-Christian than in the social and financial world. It is strange that pious people can read the Gospels and not discover what Jesus was about, and the method He followed to achieve His purpose. He said plainly enough, "I am come to save not the just but sinners." Was He to save them by banishing them from His presence?

Our Lord rubbed elbows with sinners, felt the pressure and caught the aroma of their unwashed bodies as they crowded close to Him. He was under no illusion as to their moral condition. "He knew what was in man." He was aware that they were not nice people. But He preferred contact with them rather than with the social and intellectual elite. He could have formed an academy of philosophers after the fashion of Socrates. He could have claimed a rostrum in the precincts of the Temple. It was His Father's house. But He preferred the streets, the open road, the hillside. As for personal contact with sinners, that was his delight. He could not abide those who "trusted in themselves and despised others."

St. Paul, some years later, was to confess that the Christians of his congregation were *peripsema*, "offscourings." Anyone who imagines that Jesus and Paul should have devoted themselves to congregations of aristocrats, and that either the Saviour or the Apostle shared the sentiment of Seneca, *odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, "I hate the common horde and I avoid them" has missed the Message entirely.

Some one has said — indeed a great many close students of the Gospels and Epistles have said — that the Gospel is an incentive to social revolution. One modern sociologist says "Christianity is a social revolution and it is nothing else." These professors, ostensibly devoted to exact thinking and cautious expression, do make

such wild statements! But we must confess that the sociologist's dictum has in it a glimmer of truth. St. James in his Catholic Epistle says, "If there shall come into your assembly a man having a golden ring, in fine apparel, and there shall come in also a poor man in mean attire, and you have respect to him that is clothed with the fine apparel and shall say to him: Sit thou here well, but say to the poor man stand out there or sit under my footstool . . . are ye not become unjust judges. Hath not God chosen the poor in this world rich in faith and heirs to the kingdom? But you have dishonored the poor man." In another chapter James, who by the way was the Lord's cousin, pours it on: "Go to now, ye rich men and howl in your miseries. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered . . . you have stirred up to yourselves wrath against the last days." It would be interesting to know how often sermons on that text are preached in that mood to congregations of "nice people," and how much adroit exegesis is employed to make the message inoffensive to pious ears.

However we were on the subject not of poor people but of sinners and criminals in the Church. As Lazarus the beggar was the type of poor man who found rest in Abraham's bosom, Mary Magdalen represents all sinners who came close to Jesus and were not driven away, and the "Good thief," a robber and murderer, represents all criminals whom Christ and His Church refuse to reprobate. Here and there in the early Church there were puritanical groups who held that certain sins — adultery, idolatry, apostasy — were unforgivable. The Church promptly rejected such rigorism and to the scandal of the *unco guid* she has ever since declined to refuse anyone, no matter how wicked, access to her. She is not unaware that for such leniency she incurs opprobrium. But she remembers that Christ endured and survived disdain, and so will she. To those who are fond of anathemas and excommunications she says, "You know not of what spirit you are." There are those who think the Church intolerant, and if tolerance is understood to be acceptance of error in the realm of doctrine, she is intolerant. But she is the least intolerant of all religious bodies in providing a refuge for moral outcasts. She appropriates the words of her Founder, "Come to me all you that labor and are weary

(come unto me all you that are sinful) and you shall find rest for your souls."

In the hymn "The New Jerusalem" it is said, "All who would might enter and no one was denied." That generous sentiment seems to contradict the Lord's words about "sheep" and "goats," "come ye blessed, depart ye cursed." But into the Kingdom of God on earth all may enter and no one is denied.

It would be interesting and perhaps profitable to seek an answer to the question: how many of those who become superficially acquainted with the Church remain alienated because of her pre-dilection for the poor, the sinners, the uncouth, the vulgar, the uneducated, and, above all, her tolerance for the criminal. I have read and heard criticisms of the Church because of the number of her adherents who are in jails, reformatories, houses of correction. The argument would seem to be that if we cannot make all Catholics law abiding we cannot be the Church of Christ. Such reasoning seems to be identical with that of the Pharisees. They were scandalized at the sight of the rag, tag, and bobtail who traipsed across the country on the heels of the Master. If He were what He claimed to be, why didn't He make saints of them all on the spot and in one instant. Since He could lay His hand upon a leper and cleanse him of his foul disease, why didn't He purify and sanctify all sinners with one glance?

Also, what about that embarrassing episode of the "good thief," who was also a murderer? Strange company for the Saviour as He went out of this world into the next. Were the inhabitants of heaven also scandalized?

And how about all the other wicked people with whom our Saviour came into contact? For one example, take the woman at the well in Samaria. "You have had five husbands," said Jesus, "and he whom you now have is not your husband." But the Lord didn't gather His skirts about Him and say, "see that you touch Me not." It was the woman, adulteress and half heathen who was surprised: "How is it that you, a Jew, talk to me a Samaritan?" And, she might have added, "not a good Samaritan at that." But He took the whole episode in stride — so to speak. There was no danger of contamination in her presence.

The Church seems to feel the same way. Sinners and criminals

cannot drag her down. She may possibly lift them up. Other Christian organizations seem to be not so sure of themselves. They have to be careful of their reputation. They are afraid that "nice people" may think ill of them and turn away from them, if they tolerate the company of the wicked.

There was one woman whom I had instructed carefully and at considerable length, who admitted that she was convinced, but she said, "in your church one cannot worship without contact with all sorts of persons; elsewhere I meet such lovely people." So she joined the church of the lovely people.

Catholics have a curious feeling about that matter. If ever we become so aristocratic and so respectable that the poor and the sinners and the criminals keep away from us, we shall know that we have apostatized from the true faith.

I have mentioned in the beginning of this article the young criminal whose sister advertised to all the world that the boy was a Catholic. Shortly after that "scandalous" and "embarrassing" episode, there appeared in the daily press two other items of much the same purport. In one case a woman accused of conspiracy to murder was reported in the newspapers to have attended Mass on the day of the crime and to have spoken of praying to "The Blessed Mother." The other instance was that of a woman who had kidnaped a baby, but driven by conscience or by fear, gave the child into the keeping of a Catholic pastor. We could make an explanation if not a disclaimer of responsibility in such cases. But we don't. We accept the opprobrium deserved or undeserved. We remember the Mary Magdalen episode, that of the woman at the well, and the thief on the cross. So we avoid self-justification, and we feel that we can say as St. Paul did in another kind of matter, we think we have the mind of Christ.

The Priesthood itself cannot fail. But men chosen by God to be His mediators fail to identify themselves sufficiently with Christ, the unique Priest. St. Teresa and her Carmels exist primarily to prevent this failure.

The Failure of the Priesthood

Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.

AMONG the organs of the Mystical Body of Christ, i.e., "members who do not all have the same task," each one has a vital, particular, and determined function. This is true, not only of the degrees of the hierarchy, but also of religious Orders, devoting themselves variously to the contemplative, active, and mixed life. Such is the teaching of Pius XII in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*. All the organs of the body, however, necessarily carry on their activity "in behalf of" the whole being. It is, therefore, unthinkable that the most characteristic and profound activity of religious Orders, which consists in creating and nourishing a particular trend of spirituality, should be of no value to priests. The latter, "using their sacred power," as the encyclical mentions, "are, within this Body, the primary and principal members, because through them, in virtue of the command of the Redeemer Himself, the services of teacher, king, and priest endure perpetually." The position of the priest in the life of the Church is evidently a central one. To understand this, it is sufficient to recall that the priest is the ambassador and the instrument of Christ in the world, since he is Christ visible in our midst, continuing His work of redemption and salvation of souls. While the other members of the Church ought to receive much from the hierarchy, this does not mean to say that they ought not also to give something. Even though he is invested with such a high dignity, the priest remains a man weak like the rest, and needs the grace of God because of his immense

responsibilities. We are not incapable of procuring this grace for Him, because all the souls incorporated in Christ are in a position to collaborate with Him in the work of sanctifying others. "This is certainly a tremendous mystery," Pius XII recently affirmed, "and one never sufficiently meditated upon, viz., that the salvation of many (and thus also their sanctification!) *depends* upon the prayers and mortifications voluntarily undertaken by the members of the Mystical Body of Christ for this intention."

It is, therefore, not impossible that a religious Order might have, as its special scope, to work for the sanctification of the priesthood by means of continual prayer and sacrifice undertaken for this intention. Since the priest, however, in the exercise of his delicate ministry, has need not only of grace, but also of speculative and practical knowledge, it would seem that in this field also, he could profit from the spiritual patrimony offered by each religious Order. It is precisely the needs of souls which demand this of him. Even though he is given to parochial ministry, the zealous priest finds himself faced with an immense and varied work of education, in which it will be very useful for him to profit from the specialization of others. St. Teresa of Jesus could affirm, from her own very extensive experience, that since the ways of God are many, "no confessor can profess to know them all" (a truth which should provide a motive of humility for every priest). Thus, in the direction of souls, humble prudence will urge him to have recourse to the experience of centuries, summed up in the various "spiritualities" which have been formed within the Church in its zeal for individual Christian perfection.

These "spiritualities" are, in fact, nothing more than a particular systematization of the supernatural life, "a solid, balanced, harmonious organization of all the elements necessary for the development of the supernatural life — an organization which has been proved efficacious by experience and has been established by a long tradition of teaching and practice." They are syntheses of the spiritual life, both theoretical and practical, which present a sort of "formula of living" intended to lead one to perfection. In their organic whole, they take their inspiration from a *central idea* which generally expresses in a concrete way the ideal according to which the religious institute lives.



St. Teresa of Avila

Thus, in Carmel, from its very beginnings, the central idea which has dominated and directed all its spirituality is that of *divine intimacy*, the object of the aspirations of the contemplative soul. And since, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, "With regard to the goal itself, there is no limitation," in Carmel this intimacy is envisioned in the widest and most complete manner, comprising that which can be attained on earth and which, in its supreme form, consists in mystical union and contemplation infused by God. In this union and contemplation, there is realized, by means of the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a profound and vital contact between the soul and God which greatly increases the fruitfulness of the soul's external activity. Such a concept of the spiritual life, which so clearly brings out its grandeur, inevitably leads souls to great fervor and generosity. Carmel, which so intensely desires the glory of God, seeks to spread this doctrine among pious souls capable of understanding it. And how ardently it longs to see this doctrine lived by those whose work, because of the eminent position which they occupy in the Church, can be so efficacious for the salvation and the sanctification of so many others!

Carmel, and more particularly Teresian Carmel, seeks by every means at its disposal to introduce the priest into the depths of divine friendship. By the most efficacious means of the *interior apostolate*, it works tirelessly to bring about the full sanctification of the priesthood; by its *doctrine*, it reminds the ministers of Christ that they must strive for intimacy with our Lord; by its own *way of life*, which is reflected in its doctrinal tradition, it shows them the way best suited both to acquire it personally for themselves and to direct those souls who are thirsting for perfection and seek assistance from them.

I

Carmel's Desire for the Sanctification of the Priesthood

The particular spirituality of a religious Order does not consist in its doctrinal teaching alone, but also in its practical orientation; although the latter is inspired by its doctrine.

St. Teresa of Jesus, foundress of the Reformed Carmel, desired

that the whole life of her daughters be employed in efficaciously procuring the sanctification of the priesthood. This practical attitude flowed from the lofty concept which the Saint had of the priestly mission and of the importance of its adequate fulfillment for the welfare of the entire Mystical Body. St. Teresa understood perfectly all that the Church expects of the priest and requires of his fervor; she wished, therefore, to help him in every way. It is, after all, a question of procuring the *common good*, which is so dear to all great souls.

We hear the Saint inculcating in her daughters the need of continual intercession for the priesthood, and with her contemplative intuition, she proceeds to explain how sublime this mission is.

All for the Priesthood

Even before undertaking the Reform, whenever St. Teresa happened to meet a priest highly endowed with natural qualities that made him capable of an efficacious ministry, she immediately desired to see him become holy. "I never see a person whom I like very much," she wrote in her *Life*, "without immediately wishing that I could see him wholly given to God." Impelled by this desire, she begged her God: "Lord, Thou must not refuse me this favor. Think what a good person he is for us to have as our friend." She would ask Him to draw the person to Himself, and to make of him an interior, contemplative soul; this would suffice to assure his zeal for souls. And the Lord was pleased to hear His "intimate friend." She even prayed thus for us! In fact, Teresa continues to pray for priests *through her daughters*. Not all are aware of the insistence with which St. Teresa "entrusted" to her daughters the sanctification of all priests. One need only read the first chapters of her famous *Way of Perfection*, where she explains "the reason which moved me to found this monastery with such austerity of life." There are continually recurring exhortations to her nuns to consecrate their whole lives of prayer and penance to the special purpose of helping the priests who defend the Church and sanctify souls. This is, for them, the most efficacious way of collaborating with the Lord: "By busying ourselves in prayer for those who are protectors of the Church, and for the preachers and learned men who defend her," she wrote, "we shall

do everything we can to aid this Lord of mine Who is so much oppressed by those to whom He has shown so much good." "We must always ask the Lord," she continues further on, "to sanctify the captains of this fortress or city (the Catholic Church) — that is, the preachers and theologians. . . . We must strive to make our prayers powerful in aiding these servants of God, who with such labor and effort have armed themselves with learning and holiness of life and now are working tirelessly to defend the Lord." Hear how concerned she is *for the sanctity* and the perseverance of those who must fight for the Lord in the midst of the world and its dangers: "I beg you," she says to her daughters, "to try to live in such a way as to be worthy to obtain two things from God. The first is that, among the great number of holy and learned persons who are today defending the Church, there may be many who have the necessary prerogatives (of strength and self-denial), *for one perfect man will do more than a great number of imperfect ones.*" Note how the Saint desires for priests sanctity, and nothing less! In this way alone will their work be efficacious. But not only must they be holy, but they must also remain so, and thus her second petition: "that after they have entered upon this struggle . . . the Lord may sustain them with His hand, so that they may be delivered from all the dangers of the world and cross this perilous sea with ears closed to the song of the sirens." Toward this sublime goal of priestly sanctification, Teresa directs the entire life of her daughters. If they are to strive to become "devoted friends of the Lord," and are to show this "by observing the evangelical counsels with all possible perfection," it is precisely by becoming devoted friends that they will obtain from Him what they ask with such insistence, accompanying their prayers with penances: "Do not think that to offer this petition continually is useless," the Saint concludes, . . . "If your prayers and desires and disciplines and fasts are not performed for the intentions of which I have spoken, know that you are not carrying out the work or fulfilling the object for which the Lord has brought you here." This is, therefore, the whole life of the Carmelite nuns, a life of intense prayer and mortification, entirely directed to the sanctification of the priesthood, to obtain graces for priests themselves and for their ministry. The efficacy of such a life can be gathered from the

teaching of a Pope who could certainly not be suspected of minimizing the value of external apostolic activity and whose exaltation of the internal apostolate has, for that very reason, a particular significance. Pius XI, the pope of the Missions and of Catholic Action, wrote: "Those who fulfill (in the Church) the office of continual prayer and mortification contribute much more to the spreading of the Church and to the salvation of the human race than those who cultivate the field of the Lord by their activity; if the former did not draw from heaven the abundance of divine graces to water the field, the evangelical workers would certainly reap less fruit from their labor." St. Teresa's Carmelite nuns are certainly to be numbered among those who live "the office of continual prayer and mortification" and thus exercise a most efficacious influence in the Church; according to the intention of their foundress, St. Teresa of Jesus, rather than obtaining directly the graces "to water the field" of souls, which is the object of priestly zeal, these nuns obtain them in order to sanctify the *evangelical workers themselves*. Teresa certainly knew how much the efficacy of the ministry depends on the sanctity of the minister: "One perfect man will do more than a great number of imperfect ones."

The Priest's Mission

St. Teresa expects much from priests. They are to be not only the true *defenders* of the Church, but also the *sanctifiers* of souls, helping them on the difficult path to spiritual perfection.

"The whole world is in flames," the Saint wrote. "Wicked men are burning, so to speak, with the desire to condemn Jesus Christ anew, they raise up a thousand false witnesses against Him, and dedicate themselves by every means to level His Church to the ground." Words like these seem to have been written for our own sad times. Stirred by the sight of this, Teresa seeks the remedy from priests: "It is the ecclesiastical more than the secular arm which must defend us in this struggle." And this is true even now: the effective defense of the Church depends more on the generosity and sanctity of present-day priests than on politics. Whence it is necessary that now more than ever Teresian Carmel pray fervently for priests.

Indeed, it has not forgotten the responsibility placed upon it by

its great Mother. Beautiful and well-known figures in Carmel in more recent times show that this sublime vocation is still alive in Carmelite souls. St. Teresa of the Child Jesus wrote in her autobiography: "How beautiful our vocation is! To us in Carmel is entrusted the task of preserving the salt of the earth! Let us offer our prayers and our sacrifices for the Lord's apostles; we ought to be *their apostles*, while they by word and example preach the Gospel to our brothers. How noble is our mission!" Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity once wrote to a priest: "While you are carrying the Lord to souls, I will remain like the Magdalen, in silent adoration at the feet of the Master, asking Him to make your word bear fruit in souls. To be a Carmelite is to be an apostle!"

Let it be said, for the encouragement of priestly souls, that even today, behind the silent grills of hidden Carmels, souls consecrated to a life of total love continually raise their hands to heaven to draw down the abundance of divine graces upon the priesthood.

* * * *

But if the great Mother of Carmel wished to procure courageous defenders for the Church, she also desired to procure efficient masters of sanctity for souls. "Realizing that their own sanctity depends upon holy prelates," she wrote to her daughters, "let them (who are to come) continually seek to recommend these prelates to the Lord; this is a matter of great importance."

Since the priests of the Church are the distributors of the external means of sanctity, it is clear that the abundance with which these means are presented to souls depends largely upon the priests' fervor. Continuing the work of Christ, the priest, His legate and minister, teaches His doctrine, governs souls in His name, offers the divine Victim for souls, and offers to souls the sacraments by which grace is either restored or increased in them. It is evident that the word of a priest who is zealous and filled with divine love possesses a penetrating force which cannot be equaled by the most eloquent panegyrics of a too human preacher; the discernment of spirits, so important for spiritual direction, generally increases in the priest in proportion to his sanctity; and if he loves his God deeply, he will not hesitate to assume the inevitable labor and weariness arising from long sessions in the confessional and

the celebration of late Masses. These are all things for which Christian people and pious souls have great need! Consequently, they demand holy priests!

In particular, St. Teresa of Jesus had to lament the lack of sufficient spiritual direction and the scarcity of good directors of conscience, a deficiency not limited to her own century; even in our own times, souls often are deprived of them. This happens because effective direction demands of the priest certain qualities that are not sufficiently common. The Saint, being an authority in this matter, particularly demands three qualities: *prudence*, *experience*, and *learning*. Learning is especially necessary in order to know how to guide souls in the ways of prayer without leading them astray. But this presupposes *experience*, at least of the common interior life, which in turn supposes the director to be a spiritual man, one who himself is striving for perfection. As for *prudence*, it is well known how much influence one's being well directed toward the supernatural end has upon his prudential judgment. This, again, is verified only in the spiritual man. To sum up, the director should be learned and holy, taking the latter word in a rather broad sense.

Teresa of Jesus provides for everything. With her *prayers* and *penances*, along with those of her daughters, the Saint sought to bring about the *sanctity of the priesthood*. At the same time, in her *writings*, which were later organized into a theological synthesis by her sons in Carmel, she laid the foundations of a doctrine which *teaches priests* to aspire to the highest perfection and indicates to them the way to attain it most directly.

II

Contemplative Vision of the Priest

One of the most fruitful results of recent discussions about the obligation that the priest has of acquiring perfection was to "compare" the priestly state with the episcopal state and to show how the first constitutes a real participation of the second, in which is found a true spiritual fullness. But perhaps all the consequences have not yet been deduced from this very important fact. One of these consequences is that the priestly life of the diocesan clergy

belongs to the so-called "mixed life," which, according to St. Thomas, has a singular perfection above that of the purely contemplative life and far above the simply active life.

We should not think that the distinction of active, contemplative, and mixed life concerns only the religious life. (One might be led to conclude this from the fact that the question of the pre-eminence of one or the other form of life is usually discussed by theologians in connection with the various forms of religious life.) We must not lose sight of the fact that such a distinction applies directly to the various forms of human and Christian life. Thus, it was that St. Thomas, basing himself on St. Gregory, could teach that the episcopal life belongs to the mixed life, in that it combines with the contemplative life an active life which flows from it. Among the works of the active life, St. Thomas distinguished those of material benefit, which have no particular connection with the interior life, and those of spiritual benefit, such as preaching, sacred teaching, etc., which by their very nature flow from the life of prayer and thus presuppose its existence. These spiritual benefits, according to the expression of St. Thomas, proceed "from the fullness of contemplation."

These are precisely the episcopal works *par excellence*, and they therefore require, as St. Gregory says, that the bishop "be an outstanding man of action, yet excelling all others in contemplation." Bishops, after all—and this is the most beautiful argument—are the successors of the Apostles, whose duties St. Peter declared with precision when he created the first deacons: "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Prayer and sacred teaching will be continually combined in the life of the bishop; and this corresponds precisely to the concept of the "mixed life," which affirms the necessary union of the apostolate of the word with the life of prayer.

After having understood that the episcopal life is, properly speaking, the mixed life, we may easily conclude that the priest, who is called to participate in the episcopal activity (who must, that is, preach, teach, etc., with the bishop and by his mandate, as is done, for example by the diocesan clergy to whom is entrusted the care of souls) must also live the mixed life. They carry on an activity, which, according to its nature, must be derived "from the

fullness of contemplation," that is, from a deep interior life. Does this not indicate the necessity of an intense life of prayer on the part of the diocesan priest?

In the spirituality of Carmel, everything being concentrated on the cultivation of divine intimacy, there is demonstrated in a thousand ways how prayer is the central nucleus of the whole interior life and the source of all truly supernatural activity. Carmel is a "school of prayer," and its famous doctrinal works are as so many treatises on prayer. Moreover, the problems of combining the active with the contemplative life have been diligently examined by Carmel, so that, in opposition to certain purely eremitical tendencies which existed in its very bosom, the Order, relying upon its character as a mendicant Order, was able to show very well that the active life, even that of the missions, is "its own." This led Carmel to define with precision the concept of the mixed life. The mixed life does not consist in some vague union of the contemplative with the active life, since certain exercises of the contemplative life are found even in the most active Orders. But the union should be such that the contemplative life truly *subsists*, and to it is *added* an exterior activity which remains under its influence. Otherwise, it could not be maintained that the mixed life is "more perfect" than the purely contemplative life and contains eminently within itself the perfection of both the active and the contemplative life: if the contemplative life becomes absorbed by the active life, it no longer exists; and in this case even the mixed life no longer exists. The inevitable conclusion deriving from all this is that the priest, in order to maintain the fullness of his own priestly life, must necessarily live the life of prayer, the interior life.

This is the reason that the Code of Canon Law prescribes for all priests, even the diocesan clergy, a set of daily spiritual exercises destined to nourish the spirit of prayer within the priest and to maintain him in an habitual contact with God: mental prayer, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, examination of conscience, frequent confession, retreat at least every three years; and along with and above all this, the Breviary and the Mass. We ought to note that the Code merely presents an exterior organization of their spiritual life, while the most famous documents of priestly education invite them to apply themselves to those virtues of self-denial

and contempt for the world which will best prepare them for the abundant outpouring of divine graces essential for intimacy with God.

The doctrine of Carmel makes this call to union with God become more distinct in the soul of the priest. Certainly Carmel does not confuse "contemplative life" with "contemplation." In the latter, intimacy with God is realized in the fullest manner; it is, however, a divine gift; while the contemplative life is more immediately within our own reach.

Venerable John of Jesus and Mary, one of the great masters of the Carmelite Order, taught that the contemplative life is a life which concentrates on the interior practices of mortification and virtue and especially prayer, and which has, as its goal, contemplation, for which it prepares the soul.

The "contemplative life" is therefore not "contemplation," and one could live the contemplative life for a long time without enjoying the gift of contemplation; the fact remains, however, that this life looks to contemplation as its goal, as the object of its yearnings. These yearnings are legitimate, if it be true, as St. John of the Cross teaches, that mystical contemplation is the most perfect actualization of the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all of which are principles which the soul possesses with the grace of God.

In recent times, one may note within schools of spirituality a tendency (rather general but in varying degrees) to bring contemplation "within the reach" of souls, so to speak, by insisting on the fact that it is not an extraordinary, miraculous, *gratis data* grace, but rather a singular abundance and intensity of the grace which procures personal perfection. And it is certain that these doctrines have contributed much to intensify within souls the desire for divine intimacy. Some, to be sure, are not convinced of the existence of the call to contemplation in those souls who are more active by vocation; but how could it logically be denied that there is such an invitation in those who live the contemplative life, if it be true that the contemplative life has contemplation itself as its goal and scope? And how could it not be legitimate for something to seek its own goal?

We may clearly conclude from this that the priest living the

mixed life, and thus possessing by vocation the contemplative life along with the active life, can evidently aspire to contemplation. He is without a doubt called to divine intimacy. Not without reason does the Church, in the Mass of priestly ordination, apply to the ordained the words of Jesus to His Apostles: "I no longer call you servants, but My friends!" The friends of Christ are certainly called to intimacy with God. In his *Haerent Animo*, Pius X, meditating on the duties of this holy friendship, wrote: "We are obliged as friends to find in ourselves what is in Christ, Who is holy, innocent, unstained." From his contact with the immaculate Lamb, whom he offers daily on the holy altars, the priest ought to derive that cleanliness and purity of heart which will make him ready for contemplation: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

When the priest has within his breast a heart burning with mystical love, with what intensity will he not give himself to those souls who await his ministry, an extension of the ministry of Christ Himself! . . . He will no longer know weariness; he will feel it, to be sure, but he will not pay attention to it; he will be too much absorbed in his great mission to be able to think of himself; "We fulfill our embassy for Christ!"

St. John of the Cross was right in inviting to more abundant prayer any one who believes that he can change the world by his activity, while proclaiming that he has no time to pray: "Let those then that are very active and think they can convert the world with their outward works and preaching remember that they would bring far more profit to the Church and be more pleasing to God (apart from the good example which they would give of themselves) if they spent even half this time in abiding with God in prayer; in reality they would accomplish more in this way than they do now with a thousand works, and that with less labor, since their prayer would be of such great merit and they would have won such spiritual strength by it. For to act otherwise is to hammer vigorously and to accomplish little more than nothing and at times nothing at all; at times indeed, it may even be to do harm." The Saint is right: if the priestly life is a mixed life and if his activity ought to remain under the influence of the contemplative life, we must conclude that no one can be a good priest without being a man of prayer. The Church thus quite rightly

demands of her priests that they perform many daily exercises of piety that lead to contact with God: only in this way will they be able to enter into that intimacy with God which ought to be the principal source of all their external activity. Without this, their activity either becomes weak or easily loses its supernatural character, thus undermining their priestly vocation. The clarification of the concept of the mixed life effected by Carmelite theologians thus serves not only to show the form of life that Carmel demands of its own priest, but also serves to point out for all priests their fundamental duty of prayer; and moreover it opens up to them, in the broadest possible way, the prospects of a possible divine intimacy to which they should feel themselves invited and toward which they ought to strive by means of a solid interior life.

It is apparent that Carmel, having organized its whole asceticism with a view to this divine intimacy, will be able by its traditional doctrine to illumine the path of the priest who is striving for the same goal and, moreover, has the mission of guiding interior souls entrusted to his direction.

The following is a portrayal of St. Teresa and Avila, the beginning of a comparative study of St. Teresa of Avila and Franz Kafka. Neville Braybrooke is an English writer and publisher, a contributor to Saturday Review of Literature, Books on Trial, and others.

Celestial Castles

Neville Braybrooke

AVILA

I

ABOVE Avila's eighty-six crescent-shaped towers black wings dissolve in the fiery west. At sunset the plain quivers with the day's pinkish ochre — so soon to be swallowed in the darkness. As yet the trails that have worn grooves into the turf (for the rock is near the surface) still show the herdsmen's tracks. This is the moment when the last bearings are taken, when the city's doors are bolted and barred, when belated travelers speed apace to gain the safety of the lighted battlements. Already the shepherds have lit their *braseros*, huddling together, preparing to warm the night with tales that would chill all save the bravest. At Valencia, they say, a witch plucked the liver of a blaspheming Jew from the flames. . . . In his turn, each speaker prefaces his story with a little incantation — an omen to keep away the midnight hags that ride the blue mists of the far Sierra de Greda:

It came to pass
— Let ill depart
— Let good draw near
Ill for the Moors,
Good for ourselves.

Erase que se era
— *El mal que se vaya*
— *El bien que se venga*
El mal para los Moros
Y el bien para nosotros.

Hurriedly they cross themselves, for some have heard of a sorcerer who sailed in a sieve to Ibiza to bring back alive the heart of a Moor. . . . But what does this tremendous beating of wings mean? Antonio shall see. The test of his going shall be a kind of initiation ceremony, and the boy, a mulish resignation in his body, consents: in his voice there is the *pueblo's* flat resonance of aloofness and inevitability. When he returns he says that it is some sort of bird — one that he has never seen before. They gather around more closely to question him — a bird, a prophet, or a devil?

The next day at a house in the Plazuela de Santo Domingo two grooms have come back early from the sheep-shearing; their hands are still greasy from the fleeces. A solitary cat moving across a low roof arches its back in ecstasy. A wonderful looseness of sunshine invades the garden in which the children are playing — Juan, Maria, Fernando, and Rodrigo. Rodrigo calls to Teresa, his favorite sister. Just now behind the mulberries he heard the servants speaking of a strange bird that might be a prophet. They call the others — Lorenzo, Antonio, Pedro, and tiny Jeronimo. — What does it mean? . . . Where did it come from? . . . Where was it flying to? . . . The chatter rises and falls, rises and falls . . . — What color were its wings?, they ask, dragging Rodrigo from behind the box trees. — Black, he replies — and suddenly it seems as if all the reds and blues and greens of the patio grow weary as their eyes follow the line of a tall flimsy tree whose flowering white fingers sway with a roundward motion as if beckoning them to leave their enclosed Eden and fly far out over the tessellated fortress that is their town. This is the instant when everything drains of color, growing either light or dark; when walls may collapse like cards and knowledge seem no more than an unexpected breath of wind.

Teresa, ever a precocious child and the natural leader not only of her brothers and sisters but her cousins also, is straining upon her toes, waiting to put into words what fear has left tipped on all their tongues. — What does it mean?, she chides them, a slight bossiness creeping into her tone. — Death, she answers her own question, an innocence ringing in her voice that can come only from inexperience; — perhaps our grandmother's death, she goes on, or our uncle's at Gotarrendura . . . ? Yet already her mind is soaring ahead of theirs, freeing itself of the shackles prescribed by

the closed society in which it has been nurtured. For she was a rebellious child by nature, and in many ways her mind often showed a masculine turn in its readiness to take the lead. These problems of adolescence struck her extra early — as is frequently the case with genius, since all through her life she spoke with a wisdom beyond her years. A step ahead of her time, she was always a step ahead of her generation too.

When children are young they have about them the freshness of apples; their flesh smells sweet, but over everything there falls a duality. On this side of six, paradise is never very far away; yet later when the apple tree grows in reach, everything acquires a bittersweet taste — though occasionally in second childhood cheeks regain the late clear aura of a withered apple, a kind of parting golden shell of muskiness. Teresa had always shown a great taste for the stories of the Bible, and in the parish church of San Juan she had constantly heard the preachers thunder of the great loss sustained by Adam in the garden. What garden? she would sometimes nudge Rodrigo. She had heard other preachers inveighing against false heresies now spreading like a wildfire through Spain. What were heresies? She would nudge her brother — although this time he did not move; he was held by the crescendo of the Dominican rhetoric — “Everlasting Souls to Everlasting Punishment.”

Later, as Dona Beatriz bent forward to kiss her daughter good night, Teresa questioned her: Why did the preacher say “everlasting”? What did he mean by “everlasting”?

“For ever — without end.”

Her mother’s hand was now on the door; the wrinkles had vanished. Suddenly everything became smooth. As the last flickers of the candle left the room in stillness, so Teresa no longer felt clamped down — even the bed’s baroque angels appeared airborne — for it seemed as if she were free to float, free of the heavy ornate Italian work and solid Burgundian taste that marked all the great houses in Castile — those of the Aguilas, Ornates, and Polentinos as well as the Ahumadas and de Cepedas. Suppose that she could exchange this life for the next, suppose that the price was no more than a spear thrust or a stoning, then surely the price was worth it. And how tantalizing the friars and preachers had made paradise

sound with its serpents of green fire circling the trees and whiteness the color of snow before rooftops have smirched it. . . .

"Rodrigo, for ever." The voice is spirited, the born leader's.

"Teresa, for ever." The tone is of acceptance, the born follower's.

The children had made a mutual martyrdom pact. Within a fortnight, perhaps a week, they will set off for the "land of the Moors" . . .

Within a few days the expedition was planned. Teresa was seven; her brother four years older — and might not even Avila erect its own basilica to them as already there had been erected the basilica to the three children — Vincent, Cristeta, and Sabina — who in Roman times had had their brains dashed out on the stones rather than profane the name of Jesus? Just a year or two back, a Jew who doubted that the remains of these three children were guarded by a serpent had escaped being stoned only by both calling upon the name of Jesus and promising to have himself baptized. In the closed medieval cycle of life, events in Avila had a circularity about them — an eye for an eye, but with a certain irony as in the case of Vincent, Cristeta, and Sabina and the skeptical Jew twelve centuries later. For this was essentially a society in which passions rocketed to drop like sticks; in which the fairy-tale realities of exaggerated chivalry had their counterpart in the extreme physical pangs of martyrdom exploited by the painters of religious subjects. "A Saint Lawrence bound, stretched on the grid . . . the coals alive, the fire so red that it strikes terror in the spectators." These are the words of one contemporary, Malon de Chaide. Or again: "Saint Bartholomew, bound to a table, being flayed alive . . . Saint Stephen being stoned . . . his face bleeding." There were crucifixes too that supplemented these pictorial images — crucifixes in which the wracked body was shown "with the weals made by the scourging" and "the entrails pierced," spattered by paint drops so real that even to this day, seen in the shadows of these dark churches, they seem to liquefy at sight.

It is not hard to think of the trace that such things must have left upon a child's mind — the outline, as it were, of which all that follows is a mere shading in. I do not understand one modern biographer, Miss Kate O'Brien, when she says: "Nor does . . . her

childhood reflect the woman she was to be." Indeed in what appears such precociousness — which is often akin to priggishness — lie all those temptations whose conquest were subsequently to make sainthood possible. If a definition of sainthood is needed here, it might be said that it is a genius in capacity for sanctity. Some men and women are born religiously talented; others have, on the natural plane, a gift which addicts them toward, say, either mysticism or writing or leadership. In St. Teresa's case, all three talents met.

Early on that morning when Teresa and her brother were found on their way to the "land of the Moors," it was Rodrigo who welcomed the restraining hand of fate. Already he was footsore, and it was "*la nina* who dragged me into it" he wailed to their uncle as Don Francisco Alvarez de Cepeda trundled them under his arms, their feet scarcely touching the ground as they recrossed the Adaja Bridge — one of the nine gateways into Avila.

Yet *la nina* was not so easily to be daunted. Flames filled her imagination as the fires of hell her sleep. For she was always subject to nightmares — a fact which has enabled some to argue that her "visions" were no more than the alternations between dreams and nightmares. Wish-fulfillment, it seems, is always an easy doctrine to apply. Certainly the psychologist who narrows his field to his own limited terms of reference can find all the arguments in which, because — literally and symbolically — fires were to play such a formative part in her youth, he can make her out the slave of a fire complex. (In the same way Kafka has sometimes been made out to look the slave of a mountain complex.) Yet such a constricting of argument is to misinterpret Teresa's century with the present, because in the sixteenth century fire had not been shackled into the driving force of industry that it now is. True it brought heat — Teresa often luxuriated in the blue scented smoke that dried lavender could draw from a *brasero* — but fire-lighting was still a manual task, not merely a dependence upon turning a gas or an electric switch. For much more has happened scientifically between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries than happened during the whole of the first sixteen centuries of Christianity; and part of the contemporary significance of St. Teresa of Avila resides in the fact that she stated, in the most natural idiom of her day, not what need be reinterpreted now, but rather developed, with medicine

and science coming in as auxiliaries to help define more precisely what she defined in a limited and rather exclusive literary sense. I like to remember that it is in Barcelona, not in North America nor Scandinavia, that the first shrine to our Lady as the Patron of Electricians has been built. For today critics must try to heal the dichotomy between the language of medicine and science and imaginative or visionary writing. What is needed, as it were, are words which can be employed with the accuracy of high precision instruments; and what is perhaps more interesting is the close resemblance that there exists between the beauty of high precision instruments when, for example, they record the heartbeat or the artery system and the lines of interpretation used by surrealist painters and writers — both literally and symbolically. An artist, it should go without saying, is always something of a mystic and seer as well. Those who have entered bombed buildings to find glasses of water untouched upon the mantelpiece, or an umbrella opened — filled with roses and lying across a piano, may temporarily have had that kind of shock which is so frequent in dreams: the moment when everything is whole, but which a touch can destroy. Remember Blake's prophetic pictures bear many resemblances to those shown of hydrogen bombs exploding — and in some cases Teresian texts would provide apt commentaries. In all these cases if the necessary words were easy to find — if they were a common part of one's stock vocabulary — then this interplane would have been explored. As it is, while the voyaging still remains, knowledge is all the time being added to.

On the day that Teresa and her brother were brought back by their uncle from the "land of the Moors," the armorers in the stables were at work on their father's breastplate with its great arms: a huge tower surrounded by flames. And here to childish eyes may well have stamped itself the "double image" that was to last all life: the living flames beating their reflection into the metal. For time and again, at her mother's knee, Teresa had had it impressed upon her that the Ahumadas owed their very name and existence to a miracle. Fighting the Moors, their ancestor Don Fernando had been trapped with his three sons in a blazing tower; then God had fanned the flames to provide the smoke (*humo*) to screen their escape.

So, if in the future the games that she played were to be less adventurous than the thwarted expedition to the Moors, nonetheless they remained kindled with the same kind of spirit. Her mother would find the dark oak chests rifled. Dresses of yellow Chinese silk, which she had put away with her skirts of crimson satin that had once been worn with a corsage of violet damask, were unearthed; for nowadays her mother preferred to dress as a duenna, and it was only after much entreaty from her daughter that she could be persuaded to show herself as the bride "very richly attired in silk and gold" whose wedding to Don Alonso (an early widower) had been one of "the most magnificent in all Castile." More than the other children, it was this sense of magnificence that Teresa inherited — a magnificence which sometimes tinged with a mixture of genuine piety and false humility can lead to star-studded bracelets being lined with points to prick the flesh into subservience. A martyr is one who lives with a saint, said an Irish Wag. Mother Teresa of Jesus would have enjoyed this joke, remembering how as a child she had lain thick strips of brown woolen cloth across her shoulders, clapping her hands twice and expecting her brothers and sisters and cousins to prostrate themselves, their arms folded to form a cross. Such had once been her game of "monasterio."

Yet, as she recalled subsequently, her desire to grow up and become a nun was at this time "less strong than it was for other things." Before they had bartered for martyrdom and crossed the Adaja Bridge, Teresa and Rodrigo had prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Charity: Make us martyrs and give us heaven in exchange....

Children in Avila had the run of the churches, churches in which the body of Torquemada was as venerated as that of St. Thomas Aquinas; and often with the retrospect that sets in during the late teens it must have seemed to those in Avila then — this City of Leigemen and Knights — as if not only were the whole world compressed within its walls, but that all Christian contemporary history was here in the making. The city had been set on deep foundations, and Teresa and Rodrigo now prayed that they might find hermitages worthy of the escutcheons which, above the door of their house in the Plazuela de Santo Domingo, stood for Glory

and the Faith. Alas! the rocks they gathered to roof in their hermitages fell in; they had not dug deep enough for the side walls to take the strain. In future they must lay better foundation stones; in the meantime, crestfallen, *la nina* and her brother returned to the others. Then, a few minutes later, a little haughtily she would clap her hands twice. Why were they so slow? Did they not know that she was their prioress and must prostrate themselves? Then another clap and all was well. They should be standing — as indeed they had been all the time! Yet even the novelty of "monasterio" flagged. The cloistered life seemed no more romantic than the nun's; both seemed equally unrewarding. And never far away was "the desire for other things" — especially for martyrdom and glory. Meanwhile the only alternative could be books. There lay a possible way of temporary escape.

"I thought that I could never be happy without a book." Don Alonso knowing his daughter's passion was determined that she should be able to read before she was seven. Her maternal grandmother, Dona Teresa de las Cuevas, had been unable to sign the register at her baptism. The Cepeda library was full of heavy tomes, and the lessons were long and arduous. There was Cicero's *De Officiis*, Boethius' *De Consolazione Philosophiae*, Seneca's *Proverbs*, the devotional verses of Perez de Guzman as well as his treatise on the Mass. There were, too, books about conquest in the West for which the maps lining the wall acted as a commentary. Don Alonso was by Spanish standards a man of progress, since by progress he meant the spread of Catholicism; territorial expansion was only interesting if it led to converts. This perhaps has a suspicious ring today, especially when in the past thirty years so much Fascist activity has cloaked itself in the name of religion, but Don Alonso remained to his friends essentially a peaceful man who was more attracted to the trappings of war — the crest, armorial bearings, gilt sword, and black velvet scabbard — than to its open conflicts. Over the battle of the Communeros, he had kept a firm neutral position.

So it was with a sure hand he guided his daughter's reading. Romances were out of the question — in fact were not these romances then circulating in Spain the devil's bait "which he dangled before the sentimental feelings of frivolous boys and girls"? Dona

Beatriz held her peace, though inwardly she knew her mind. On the contrary, were not these romances most necessary to excite boys and girls in the pursuit of arms and to stimulate the manly deeds of their forefathers? Had not she brought up her children on the story of Dona Jimena who, in the absence of her husband, the governor, and his troops, manned the walls of Avila against the Moors — not singlehanded, but joined by the rest of the women who for the event disguised themselves with the help of beards and large hats? Surely these legends which were the bases of these romances abounded with deeds of glory and virtue? At the moment Don Alonso was not back from his estate; Dona Beatriz might safely read to her daughter. The story she chose was that of *Amadis de Gaule* — a story that at the time that it was firing Teresa also caught within its spell another young man, Ignatius Loyola. In soft, clear tones, Dona Beatriz read on into the night.

King Lisuart's daughter was Oriana, the most beautiful creature men had ever seen. She was so beautiful that she was called the Peerless. The queen gave her the Lord of the Sea to serve her and said to her: "Darling, this is a young lord (i.e., Amadis) for your service."

"He pleases me," replied Oriana.

This remark was so deeply engraved in the young lord's heart that it was never more effaced. As the story relates, he was not displeased at serving her and his heart was fixed on her unceasingly. . . .

In the *brasero* the lavender crackled as the flames charred the stalks, dissolving them into black butterflies.

"Did they love each other for ever and ever?" asked Teresa.

"For ever and ever," replied Dona Beatriz, as her gentle voice went on with the story: "For this love lasted as long as they lived, he loving her as she loved him, so that they ceased not to love one another for a single hour."

This was glory — that glory which St. Teresa was to comment on later, saying that "like love it was useless unless it was for ever." Yet not always did everything flow so simply, not always were these pure crystalline images carried from childhood's pools of memories: there were muddyings of the water when the sky suddenly became overcast with darkness. What of those voices Rodrigo had heard behind the mulberries? What of the strange bird from

heaven, or was it a devil? Her mother's voice soothed her. She must be in bed before her father returned, for it was late and Dona Beatriz was tired, being already several months advanced in another pregnancy. In any case, all her family had to be up for an early start. Tomorrow they had a journey before them. Gotarrendura lay three leagues away.

The next morning the town awoke to a chorus of bells. The six o'clock Angelus pealed from San Domingo, San Pedro, San Roman, San Nicholas, San Cebrian, San Pelayo. These were the bronze voices which had been preceded by the wooden clappers of the Poor Clares, Cistercians, and Franciscans. There was a whole language of bells to be fathomed, a whole history to be wrung out as the stately booming chimes of the cathedral sent the mules off with their crimson and green harnesses and their pack saddles laden with hampers and jars of oil. Then upstairs to the children came the patterning of sandal-shod feet: a confirmation that the real world lay behind the shutters.

Two hours later the procession was ready to move off. As the mules drew tight upon their collars, they set jingling the little litanies that would herald this caravan's approach all down the rocky roads. Teresa was riding side-saddle, unwilling to drive in the coach with her mother and tiny Jeronimo lest her other brothers should laugh at her. As they crossed the squares with their fountains and squeezed their way between the narrow streets, the carpenters were at work on cherubs, adding a dimple, passing a comb through flaxen wigs, re-emphasizing the shadows below the eyes; they were intended for St. Sebastian's great feast day.

For the Ahumadas and Cepedas this was to be the last of Avila for several months, this city of saints and stones (*santos y cantos*) whose shape had scarcely altered since Christ had walked on the Sea of Galilee, whose cathedral in the eleventh century had swollen like an immense bastion out of its eastern wall.

Down past the Adaja Bridge they made their way. Once before, returning, the gray granite walls had hidden the white towers and red tiles that now shone within the battlements. Before, the arms of Teresa's uncle had skimmed her and Rodrigo along the ground like birds — that uncle whom they were now to visit. New vistas were opening. Silvery olive trees with their black stems rising from the

pink earth divided the field of corn and aromatic wastes which were thick with cistus thickets and lavender: the lavender that Teresa so loved and was stored at home in the stable lofts. Occasionally a muleteer passed, coughing a guttural "Arres" in recognition as he aimed a long jet of brown saliva at the grass. Avila would soon be on the horizon. Far off a dog howled. Teresa turned for a last look; this was still middle distance. Then above, circling, she saw a bird forget the soaring ease of the day and swoop low over their heads. She gripped her talisman. What did it mean? She feared to call her mother. Home lay more than a league away. In all the gray dust eddying around them the city might have been a witches' caldron, and she remembered the stories which she had heard from servants but never quite understood. She was glad that Rodrigo was close to her. If she questioned her father, he would say that his little girl had been listening to too many romances. Yet now as the middle distance drew into the horizon, Avila's towers only showed here and there rising up above the dust of their trail. It was like a castle whose buttresses are built on faith. Finally the hazy heat seemed to swirl about them like a mist and Avila was lost. For all she knew it might have vanished into thin air.

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BOOK REVIEWS

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THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH,

by Monsignor Gerard Philips,

Fides, Chicago, Ill., 1956, 175 pp., \$3.25

THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH,

by Michael de la Bedoyere,

Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, Ill., 1955, 111 pp., \$2.75

First, and almost imperceptibly, the wall rose up between priest and layman. Then came the creeping and, for some, frightening awareness that Christ's work was being bogged down, His word losing meaning if not substance in the soul-numbing separatism.

Then came the warning, first from Rome, and echoing around the world. Man's soul was exposed to a dechristianizing secularism. The wall had loomed so large that the priest on one side and the layman on the other had drawn farther apart. In Catholic countries, anti-clericalism poisoned the human relationships of the Church. France had become a pagan country. And other nations where the Church had earlier exercised a tremendous influence were becoming missionary territory.

The warnings were accompanied by a call to action. The world's perceptive spiritual leaders wisely prescribed a two-pronged attack on the wall. The priest was to quit the bounds of the rectory and join the lay faithful in their secular milieu, bringing with him the grace and wisdom that was his to dispense. The layman, meanwhile, was to share more directly in the apostolic mission in the necessary work of christianizing the secular institutes.

The response was heartening. Sometimes it was extreme, and in places it lacked prudence and essential theological foundations entirely. But the work, finding inspiration and direction, went on. In France there were the worker-priests. There and elsewhere, including America, the Catholic Action movement found impetus in organizations like the Young Christian Workers and the Christian Family Movement. Other lay institutes sprang up. Publications by lay groups spread the good work, and the role of the laity in the Church became crystallized for many.

Failures, however, were not uncommon. The mortality rate among organized lay endeavors, in fact, is a continually discouraging aspect of the religious revival. Often, of course, the cause lies in the want of a solid foundation. The theological bases for the sociological ap-

application of Christian principles by the laity have to be learned. Then comes the plan of action.

And so, Catholic Actionists would benefit immeasurably from a careful reading of these two slim volumes. They are loaded with truth and with vision. But they cannot be taken in easy gulps.

Monsignor Gerard Philips' work is an exposition, with historical documentation, of the theological principles concerning the place of the layman in the Church's mission. It is, at times, heavy going. And as Rev. John B. Sheerin, C.S.P., once observed, though the French seem to possess that "positive genius for stirring up the fervor of the reader and for challenging him to measure up to the magnitude of the task that confronts him," their propositions unfortunately, are not always valid for Catholics in America or other countries.

But the book does alert, with profound and irrefutable reasoning, the willing and intelligent layman to the "noble exigencies of his state." And it blueprints that solid foundation for a dynamic and enduring structure of lay participation.

After his painstaking presentation of this design for Christian living, Monsignor Philips writes that laymen "can be entrusted with more than simply giving witness to their Faith. They can also receive, as we have said, a special mission, a canonical designation of mandate that is a type of official recognition for a more determined ecclesiastical task. In this case, as limited and dependent as it may be, their title to the apostolate nevertheless carries greater weight than the universal vocation of all Christians."

"The law of charity," he says, "which is the soul of the Church, designates the Christian as a bearer of salutary grace for all the present members of the Body of Christ and for all its future members. From the highest leader to the most humble of the baptised, the line of descent that starts from the Incarnate Word and guarantees the transmission of heavenly gifts is never broken."

And he concludes: "After the hierarchy, then, it is the layman in the Church who receives all so as to give all. The Word, the Sacraments, the law of liberty — the layman benefits from all these in a total act of living Faith: they are not his to imprison in his own egoism but to radiate in charity."

To some extent, la Bedoyere's *The Laymen in the Church*, for readers in the United States, shares the shortcomings of Msgr. Phillips' learned work. On the whole, though, it is remarkably relevant to the American problem of developing a solid lay spirituality. And it attacks with special vigor the "clericalist" notion that only the priest can do real

Christian work and the way to participate in Christ's redemption is to help the priest.

This notion, says the author, derives not from a sense of spiritual unity but rather from a false sense of separateness. "The lay clerically race, feeling itself separate from an idea of fuller Catholicity realized only in the priesthood, wants to imitate it and wants somehow to get as close to it as possible. Since it cannot possibly achieve this, it seems to be condemned to live in a grey limbo of its own where both priestly apostolic effectiveness and lay apostolic effectiveness are impossible."

In lively sensitive language, the author puts Christ in the world and shows us our proper relationship with Him. The place of prayer, of the liturgy, of nature, and family relationships are clearly defined. And the social implications of lay spirituality are compellingly put down...

In 111 pages this keen Fleet Street observer does in fact realize his expressed hope — that "I have succeeded in drawing some picture of an ideal of secular Christian spirituality, and of the role of the lay Catholic in the Church, faced as it is in these times with a world full of good decent people caught up in the disorder of clashing ideologies and interests and carried along by the immense forces of a technological and impersonal age." William A. McNamara, Providence, R. I.

HELPS AND HINDRANCES TO PERFECTION, by

by Thomas J. Higgins, S.J.,
Bruce, Milwaukee, 258 pp., \$4.50

The Catholic Church has always insisted that her members tend toward sanctity. Yet no times have offered more obstacles to Christian perfection than our own. Philosophers and scientists reason that God cannot be seen or touched, tested or formulated. Therefore, He does not exist, and to believe in the nonexistent is utter foolishness. From all sides human dignity is assaulted. Doubt, skepticism, illicit pleasures, expediency now are where faith, hope, and charity once reigned. Still Holy Mother Church insists that her members become saints. For those who take this exhortation to heart and earnestly strive after a life of perfection, *Helps and Hindrances to Perfection* by Father Thomas Higgins, S.J., will prove a timely aid. In a previous book, *Perfection is for You* (Bruce: 1953), this Jesuit retreat master and professor insisted that "high holiness is truly intended for all Christians." The present work deals intelligently with the outstanding aids and obstacles with which all who desire sainthood must reckon.

Father Higgins' first of twelve chapters treats of Faith. Accepting God's revelation is the minimum requirement for salvation. "Amen, I say unto you, that he that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath everlasting life." Faith, too, is the foundation of all spiritual activity. "Not only can nothing worthy of eternal life spring from a soul destitute of faith, but all the wonders of charity and union which God produces in the soul are proportioned to the depths of faith and the continuing petition of faith" (p. 13). Drawn by the Father and assisted by the Holy Spirit one must daily strive that "his every act be illumined by pure faith and motivated by the love of God" (p. 17). Again and again throughout his book, the author insists on this point of faith. It is necessary in every phase of the spiritual life. Strengthened by faith, tepidity is fought off, poverty of spirit acquired, and the Christian apostleship diligently carried on.

In his chapter entitled "Reparation," Father points out that every Catholic, as a member of Christ in His Mystical Body, has the sublime dignity of offering to God, the Father, acts of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and reparation. Least understood of these is reparation. "Man has sinned: man must do penance." Christ, the God-Man, performed the essential act of reparation for the offenses of mankind by His bloody death upon the cross. But what Christ did corporally in His life on earth He continues to do mystically until the end of time through the medium of His Church. Thus reparation for sin still being committed is daily continued by the members of Christ's Mystical Body. How do men effect this reparatory activity? Father laments the tragedy of wasted suffering. ". . . all suffering is wasted which is not endured in union with the cross of Christ. Only thus is human pain capable of producing everlasting value" (p. 125). Everyone must suffer whether he likes it or not. The inevitable ups-and-downs of life, illness, heart-break, even faithfulness to the duties of one's state in life, all have reparatory value. "If we take them submissively, thankful that we are asked to bear a part of Christ's burden, they instruct us, they mellow us, they form us in the image of Christ" (p. 125). That exercise of this important function of the Mystical Body is incumbent on every Catholic is emphasized by Our Lady of Fatima. ". . . Make sacrifices for sinners. Remember that many souls are lost because there is nobody to make sacrifices for them."

Father Higgins continues in the same vein in his essay on Work, demonstrating the absolute necessity of leading a true life of prayer, not merely in our own interests, but also for the well-being of the whole Body into which we have been mercifully incorporated. ". . . Whoever

is withdrawn from active pursuits, whether in the cloister or in a third-floor-back apartment, and finds God in uninterrupted prayer, is building Christ in the souls of other Christians" (p. 195). His concluding discourse, *Fishers of Men*, shows that it is by prayer that all may participate in the excellent activity of Catholic Action. If we only pray the Lord to send forth laborers into the harvest, we exercise an apostolate. "For solicitude for vocations to the apostolate is part of (the) apostolate" (p. 244).

In chapter nine the author strikes out at those who equate sanctity and a sour face. "The effort for perfection is not the hamstringing of human efficiency but the release of our highest faculties from the obstacles which hinder their best functioning. Upon this process should attend a keen delight, not an empty, colorless discontent" (p. 167). After showing that pleasure is a secondary good not to be sought in itself, Father lists at some length the joys which often accompany the quest for sanctity. Peace of mind, intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction, warmheartedness will accrue to the soul if only it seeks God unreservedly. On this latter point, Father might be more emphatic. To seek God alone and to be united in one will with Him is the end of the spiritual life. The aspirant must always be mindful that the sole delight of the saint is to do the will of God. At another point in this chapter he applies to St. John of the Cross' maxim: "Strive always, not after that which is most easy, but that which is most difficult . . . and desire to be detached from all things, empty and poor for Christ's sake . . . that thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing" the text of St. Matthew, "all men take not this word but they to whom it is given. . . . He that can take it, let him take it." But the author himself is as uncompromising when he encourages his readers to purify their hearts, to cast aside selfish loves and disorderly desires for natural things that they may be filled with the supernatural, to embrace the totality of the cross. The important words of St. John must be emphasized: "strive always . . . desire to be detached . . . seek pleasure in nothing." This striving, desiring, and seeking is fundamental to all souls who ambition perfection as strongly as Father Higgins proposes it. At least the *Dark Night* and the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* of the Doctor of Love can and should be used by all who seek true intimacy with Christ.

In remaining chapters the soul is shown how to deal with impatience, fear, delusions, scrupulosity — all cripplers in the spiritual life. On the other hand, it is stressed that friendships, marriage, pleasure, work, and activity are not hindrances to perfection, but when reasonably ordered

to the attaining of our final end, they become definite aids.

Father Higgins draws his themes from Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church. This body of doctrine he flavors with quotations from the world of secular literature. Many points are illustrated by events chosen from world history and the lives of the saints. The book is clearly written, logically developed, and its provocative pages are not obscured by theological terminology.

Helps and Hindrances to Perfection is not directed toward any particular class of Catholics. In his Preface, Father quotes a letter sent to him in response to his book *Perfection Is for You*. One line reads, "You could not know how very much I desire to be lost in Christ, that Our Heavenly Father would see in me only His Beloved Son, that all my ugliness would be hidden by the brightness of the Light that came into the world." This sounds very much like what a cloistered nun might write. It is, in fact, the thought of a housewife and mother of five children. What this kitchen contemplative wants to know is exactly what everyone who dares to hope for sanctity — religious, cleric, or lay — wants to know. How do we "skid the id and shy the I" as she charmingly puts it. St. Paul gives us the answer: Put on the Christ! Father Higgins shows us how: Strive daily to deepen the God-given virtues of faith, hope, and charity; meditate often upon Christ in the Gospels; participate intelligently in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church; imitate Mary; sanctify the present moment. In this way we "will make that last surrender and will leap out of self to be ready for union with God." Frater Kevin, O.C.D., Holy Hill, Wis.

THE MEANING OF MONASTIC LIFE, by Louis Boyer, Kenedy, New York, 1956, 209 pp., \$4

It is always a pleasure to read Father Boyer. Whenever he digs into orthodoxy with his acute mind he uncovers something new — because it has been buried so long — or something controversial. Both are good for the vitality of the Church; but what he says in both cases should be challenged so that the truth, even when solidly based on tradition, can be clarified and applied as the need of our time demands.

The Meaning of Monastic Life gives one an excellent opportunity to step back and gain a better perspective of the value of Father Boyer's traditionalist approach in his writings on the liturgy. He is to be commended for his efforts to restore orthodox Christianity; yet it is the opinion of this reviewer that he stumbles on a common failing of traditionalists — that of giving so much attention to the past that the

present is neglected. To know what has existed before is important but not more so than having a full awareness of the now.

It can't be denied that Father Boyer is keenly aware of the degenerate state of Christian worship; for this reason he has turned to a former and more vital age. However, only the essential element of tradition survives from the past; only this can be applied now. What is accidental to tradition is rooted in a particular age; this cannot be applied now. The truth can be effective in a temporal situation only if it operates in close union with the prevailing circumstances which shape this accidental medium. To couch the essential truth in what is accidental to the past hinders its working; principles are obscured when they resound with too many overtones of a former age.

When Father Boyer speaks of the ideals of monastic life he seems to be speaking of a past age of faith which was better able to understand the idea that there is, as he puts it, an "irreconcilable antagonism between the City of God and the City of Man — the realm of the spirit and that of the flesh." He says, "Nothing finer or better can be said of monastic life than that it is a Christian life breaking all ties with the world, all bonds that may prevent it from being complete." Our materialistic culture, which tends to level differences, does not respond to and cannot absorb that which is presented as something entirely different from the world it knows and with which, unfortunately, it is so involved. Therefore, monasteries, which are the spiritual powerhouses of Christ's Mystical Body, are hindered in exercising a positive influence on a more and more worldly Church if they are stressed at being something completely contrary to what secular society knows. To insist that they are such, makes monks an enigma, impossible to understand; they become in people's minds odd or maladjusted, or at best awesome and aloof; whereas, they should be looked on as brothers, closely united in Christ.

Father Boyer's remarks in the several chapters he devotes to penance and mortification also seem to be lifted out of an ideal past. He says, "if the monk does not lead a 'dead life,' he is only a sham monk, he is not a monk at all"; and "it is not a matter of a purely spiritual death; that would mean nothing at all. It can only be a question of a real, in other words, a physical death, just as our presence in this world is physical"; and "we have said already, and it cannot be too often repeated, that it is insofar as it is a life of faith that a monk's life must be a death-life." These statements seem meaningless or morbid to an age which has yet to learn the value of disciplining the body. Only after it has learned to do this will it be able to com-

prehend something more extreme and severe, such as "dying in the flesh." Our society is not one of physical extremes. Paradoxically, though it places more emphasis on the physical, it has less feeling for it. Passions and emotions are tame when compared with former times; likewise, is our physical vigor. Therefore, mortification, while not less important, has taken a modified form as exemplified, not by rigorous extremes of penance, but by the "little way" of the great saint of our modern age, St. Therese of Lisieux. It cannot be argued that the disposition of those in the secular world toward mortification should not be used to measure that of those in monastic communities; for monks themselves have lived in the world and bring to the monastery a background peculiar to our time. This background has to be recognized and understood so that monastic life today can take on a vitality and individuality different from anything in the past.

There is much good in Father Boyer's efforts to restore purity of principle and bring back orthodox truth to Christian worship. But it is for the good of people that all of Christian heritage exists; and it is in them that tradition must live or not at all. Therefore, because tradition depends for its existence on people, and not *vice versa*, people, not tradition, should always be the primary concern. In spite of this, Father Boyer says about certain religious practices, undesirable in themselves, but which have arisen through the needs of the people: "We may be permitted to wonder whether with such phrases as the 'good God,' the 'little Jesus' and certain other childish idols of a Christian imagination which has become degenerate, God is not, as it were, dead for Christians themselves. . . . Are there any more terrible and more irremediable blasphemies than those we utter on our knees, imagining we are glorifying Him whom we insult? The derisory image we form of God, and which is what we use when we claim to be adoring Him, offends Him much more directly than hatred, which is, after all, a misunderstanding." The condition of Christian worship which has withered to something so emotional and sentimental is tragic. But the greater tragedy is the spiritual starvation of people who have abandoned tradition and its potentially life-giving truths, because these have become hardened and rigid doctrines, unable to be digested and thus unable to fill their needs. Undesirable religious practices and colored-water devotions are unguided gropings caused by peoples' spiritual hunger; they are desperate snatches at something to quiet their craving for needed nourishment that is not to be had; and so some less desirable but more immediately satisfying child of spiritual hunger pangs is born.

In this book, Father Boyer looks at the meaning of monastic life

from the standpoint of tradition and apart from the life of the secular world; for he says, "The original meaning of the word 'Holy' or 'Sacred' is precisely that: that which is apart." However, monks have an obligation to enrich the whole of the Mystical Body with the fruit of their lives, never letting apostolic labors detract from their contemplative end, but giving them the opportunity to become a valuable complement to this end. Even complete contemplatives, who have no direct contact with the world, can do this through their writings. But to do it effectively, those in monasteries must have a feeling for the currents of the secular world; otherwise, their spirituality, because isolated, lapses into convention; their tradition, because it feeds on itself, becomes jaded; and their writing becomes lifeless and clichéd, because it is nourished by platitudes. The lasting treasures of monastic tradition did not develop apart from the world. The tradition was enriched by monks who were very conscious of the world and who fought against its evils and worked in union with its good. The Mystical Body, being one, learns and grows together; and those who are its members can leave a heritage for the benefit of all ages if there is a united effort of religious and laity to realize the problems and particular circumstances of our age and shape their spirituality accordingly.

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